The Magazine for Golden Age and Silver Age Collectibles

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 29
November 1995

FRIENDLY GHOSTS THEY'RE NOT!

Harvey Horror!

FOR THE FIRST TIME! IN DEFENSE OF

Dr. Fredric Wertham

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Volume 2 • Number 29
November 1995
A Gemstone Publication

PICTURED HERE:
The "glowing" back cover from ***Bugs Bunny's Halloween Parade*** **#1 .**
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ALL CHARACTERS © WARNER BROTHERS

ON THE COVER:
Casper gets some Halloween scares from a bug-eyed green monster in the tunnel of fun from ***Casper the Friendly Ghost*** **#20.**
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Coming Next Issue .....**IBC**

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Issue Number 29, November 1995

Combination Grades...Again!

Over the last year and a half, I've received quite a few letters and phone calls asking about the use of "combination grades" such as VG/FN, FN/VF, VF/NM, etc. Most know that I'm not a proponent of their use, a viewpoint I stated in my "Letter From The Editor" way back in *Overstreet Monthly #11*. To respond to the many inquires, I thought I'd "reprise" what I wrote those many months ago.

The industry wide use of "in-between grades" has been a common practice since the beginning of fandom. Many utilize them in order to more specifically describe a grade exactly between two adjacent grades. Although I do not think that the practice is inappropriate per se', I also do not encourage the practice of using in-between grades, and for several reasons.

First is a definitional argument. I hold the opinion that, technically, these combination grades attempt to assign a grade to the imaginary line of demarcation BETWEEN two grades, a line that really doesn't exist. As an example, take the (if you'll pardon the expression) "pseudo-grade" VF/NM. I propose that a comic can either grade as high as possible in the Very Fine range, or as low as possible in the Near Mint Range...BUT NOT BOTH! If you accept the idea that there are eight (and only eight) basic grades, Poor (PR), Fair (FR), Good (GD), Very Good (VG), Fine (FN), Very Fine (VF), Near Mint (NM), and Mint (MT), then this concept is not too hard to grasp. I do support the use of plus signs and minus signs to indicate the upper and lower ends of each grade range. But Very Fine plus (VF+) is still a distinctly different (and significantly lower) grade than Near Mint minus (NM-)!

I have a second reservation concerning combination grades. It is related to both consumer confusion and the credibility of the grader. I'm interested in the issue of potential consumer confusion because I often buy comics through the mail. When I see a book advertised as VF/NM, I think "which is it? Is the book really a high VF or a low NM. And if it's a low NM, why confuse the issue with the use of VF label at all?" In most every case during my three decades of collecting experience, comics graded VF/NM were always Very Fine to VF+ and did not qualify as Near Mint.

In the area of seller credibility, I sometimes wonder about it... especially if combination grades are used to describe nearly every book on the list. Over-use of combination grades may be an indicator that the grader could be having difficulty differentiating between VG and FN, FN and VF, and most importantly VF or NM. I'll be the first one to admit that I have encountered comics that defied by ability to absolutely classify them as, say VF or NM. But in these cases, I refrain from using VF/NM in favor of VF+, because it is the safest and most conservative label fro the buyer.

That's my opinion... but let me say in closing, that many dealers, collectors, and close friends whose grading skills I sincerely respect, have a different and totally opposite opinion on this topic. I welcome any and all feedback and look forward to hearing your point of view.

Gary

Gary M. Carter

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Mike Kaluta and Russ Heath

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PAGE 5 $650

PAGE 11 $175

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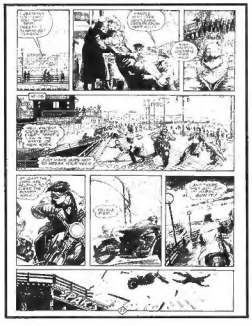


PAGE 22 $200

PAGE 23 $225

PAGE 24 $350

White Mountain "Mad"- ness

The following are rarely offered items outside of auction, and some of the few remaining White Mountain pedigree books available to the public . They are characterized by the brilliant cover inks, and exceptional interior paper quality which have made this collection one of the most sought after of the Silver Age. Many are arguably the best examples available. Please note that ALL premiums are intact and present on all Annuals!

ALL NM/NM- UNLESS NOTED

Mad Magazine

24-25,30-35,36 (VF/NM) 37-38, 40-49, 50, 51,53 (VF/NM) 54 (VF/NM W/2/3 spine split) 55-57

This Lot.....$9,500 (under 3x Guide)

The Worst from Mad Anthologies

1-4,5 (VF, W/1" spine split bottom) 6-7, 8 (VF/NM) 10-11

This Lot.....$4,250

Mad Follies

1 (VF/NM),2-3 This Lot.....$825

More Trash from Mad

2 (NM/NM- Rt. up. corn rounded)

3,5-7,9 This Lot $1,050

Famous Monsters of Filmland

1 (FN/FN+) Yearbook 1 (VF/NM)

This Lot.....$1,000

Castle of Frankenstein

1,6,16,19,21-25.This Lot.....$375

Amazing Spiderman

30 .....$250

33 .....$225

42 (VF/NM).....$150

48 .....$100

81 .....$60

90 .....$75

97 .....$50

98 .....$150

99 .....$60

103 .....$50

116 .....$50

117 .....$50

118 .....$50

119 .....$75

123 .....$50

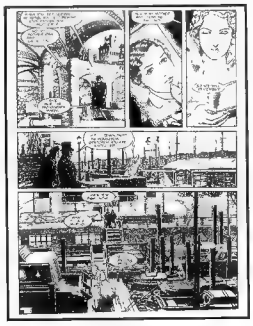
Silver Surfer

1 (VF/NM) $750

PAGE 26 $225

PAGE 29 $250

PAGE 30 $250



PAGE 31 $250

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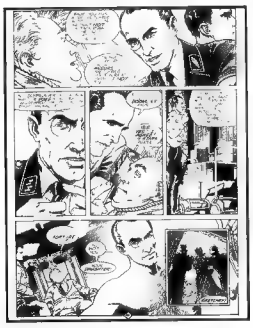
PAGE 36 $200



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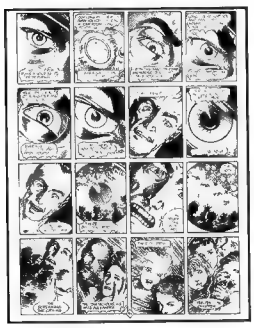

PAGE 54 $500

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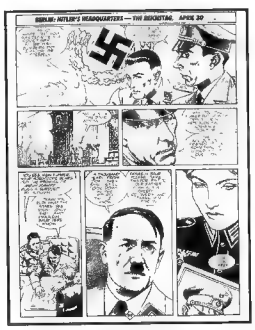

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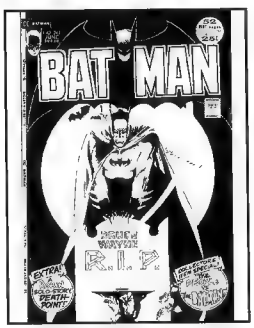

KALUTA- BATMAN #242
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7,8 VF/NM (each)..... $60.
11, 12-16, 18-20 VF/NM (ea.) $45

Strange Tales

101 FN/VF-..... $500
102 FN/VF-..... $100
104 VF..... $125
108 VF/VF- $50

Star Trek (Gold Key)

1 FN/FN- $150
3,5 VF $125
Captain America100 VF $150
Conan1 NM- $150
Fantastic Four 6 FN/VF $300
Fantastic Four 10 FN/VF $300
Ghost Rider (1973) 1 NM/NM- .$60
Iron Man & Sub. 1 FN..... $60
Iron Man 1 VF..... $150
Iron Man 55 NM/NM- $75
JLA 6 FN/VF $75
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Tales to Ast. 35 VF/VF+ $1000
World's Finest 400 VG-/VG $75
Stuntman 1 FN/FN+..... $225
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Most Informative

I think your magazine is the most informative in dealing with Golden Age/Silver Age collectors - there is no comparison to the stories and art by these artists within these time frames. Again, thank you for understanding this fan's appreciation towards your magazine. Sincerely,

Kevin Brown, New Jersey

5¢ & 10¢ A Copy

Thank you for putting out a really fine publication. I really enjoy the articles on the Silver Age comics and the market reports.

Back when I was in my teens in the 60's, I usually received between $2-$5 a month for allowance and would go down to a second hand store which sold comics for between 5¢ and 10¢ a copy... and blow the whole amount. Most of these comics didn't have covers but some did!

I was mainly into Metal Men, Superman, etc. I did buy several of the Marvel pre-hero comics and for some reason had problems with buying their comics when they went over to the super hero comics.

Those which I remember buying for 5¢ each included Showcase issues with Adam Strange, Green Lantern, Metal Men, Challengers of the Unknown, and Brave and the Bold, which had the Viking Prince. With the comics going through my other 4 children there usually wasn't that much left of them. I can remember buying Fantastic Four annual #1 off the newsstand for 25¢, Superman annuals #3-7 for 25¢ each. One comic which I was able to keep until 1976, when I got married, was Amazing Spiderman #1 which I had bought for 5¢ and sold for $100.

From approximately 1969-1971, I became a mail order comic dealer and issued a regular comic price list. My ads were mainly in the RBCC (Rocket's Blast Comic Collector) in the classified section. The art used in the RBCC for their features was really outstanding. As comic stores were unknown in the areas where I lived, there was the great eagerness to wait for the arrival of the next RBCC! I even tried to buy comics through the RBCC, but with little success.

For instance, a collector tried to sell me a mint copy of Amazing Spiderman #10 for $1, but I felt that the price was way too much, as I would have resold it for much less. I remember buying Iron Man #1, Sub-Mariner #1, Hulk #102, in quantity right off the newsstand.

The biggest problem with RBCC was the fact that some of the advertisers took advantage of the customers ordering from them. I lost over $100 in ordering from a big advertiser from Milwaukee, Wisconsin! In 1976, I sold the balance of my collection and went completely out of comics. The times just weren't as exciting as they were back in the early 1960's!

As I look at the future, I am somewhat bothered by (a) the popularity of the bad girl comics, (b) various distribution centers "exclusively distributing" certain comic companies, and (c) certain dealers that take unfair advantage of collectors. That's all for now!

Albert Swindle, Michigan

Lo & Behold

I recently attended my first San Diego Con, where I had the pleasure of meeting legendary creators like Gil Kane, Sheldon Moldoff (from whom I bought a gorgeous patriotic drawing of the Golden Age Flash), Joe Sinnott, Kelly Freas, and Will Eisner (a gracious and brilliant man) who seemed to get as much of a kick out of autographing my 53-year old copy of Uncle Sam Quarterly #3 as I got out of watching! I also found the time to stop by the Gemstone booth and score some freebies, including a copy of the excellent San Diego Con Commemorative Edition of CBM #26. Thanks, guys!

A personal highlight of San Diego was beginning my original art collection. Being a typical starving student, I never dreamed I'd be able to afford original artwork from the Golden Age, especially knowing how few pieces survived. But, lo and behold, I managed to find a great Sparkman page from Sparkler Comics priced within my budget! The page is drawn by Reg Greenwood and depicts Sparkman, a boy sidekick named Hu-See, and a woman tricking a squadron of Japanese planes into bombing a harmless field, thinking it's a camouflaged air base.

The dealer I bought it from estimated that it came from a 1942 issue, but he didn't know which one. Can any Sparkler Comics afficionados out there help me identify which issue this page came from? The number 10 is written on both the back and front, so it's probably page 10 of the story, and in the last panel Hu-See and Sparkman wave good-bye to the woman as they plan to go after someone called "The Fox." I'd also like to know more about the artist, Reg Greenwood, by whose work I was impressed but not unfamiliar with.

Another question I have concerns a comic book stand bought for me a few years ago by my mother at a flea market. Manufactured by Dell, it's rectangular, made of wood and is about five feet high. It has five tiers, and each tier has three adjacent berths for comics. Painted across the base of the second tier from the top, in red letters on a blue background, is "Dell Comics are GOOD comics". A copy of Walt Disney's Comics & Stories #104 (1947), the oldest Dell comic I own, fits comfortably in one of the berths. I'd be really curious to learn any information anyone has on this item, particularly its age and market value, if any (not that I'm planning to sell).

If anyone can answer my questions, I'd really appreciate it. Thanks again for the freebies, and, as always, for your fine publication. Sincerely,

Chris Gage, California

House Ads

I got the latest issue a couple of weeks ago, (the great, multi-tone WITNESS cover). Another beauty! The main reason I'm writing to you is - I just got an idea you might be able to use. I'd like to see an article on the great "house ads" that DC printed during the 1950's and early '60's. Does anybody know the person responsible for them?

From 1949-63 they all bear the marks of one designer. At the time (when we were kids), we thought they were throwaway hack-work...something delegated to the shop drone. But, as I get older (and still in the graphics business), I'm realizing that these ads are mini-

masterpieces of composition. It won't be much longer until that entire mid-20th Century style is considered an impenetrable anachronism... yeesh! We can't even duplicate it now!

Well, I better wrap it up for this time. Thanks a lot for the great job you're doing on CBM - it keeps getting better and better.

Dan Fleming, Kansas

Good idea Dan, Pat Calhoun is developing just such a series even as we speak. And Lisa sends a big thank you for your nice comments on the Witness cover... she worked mighty hard on it.

I Cheered

CBM's "Favorite Cover Survey" was fantastic. I cheered when I saw Showcase #26 included by L. Thomas. As a boy of twelve, with one dime in my hand, I had to choose between Showcase #26 and Brave and Bold #29. The JLA cover was great, but in the Showcase, aliens in ancient Egypt! Non-super powered heroes! Rip Hunter and partner were even carrying guns! The great Kubert art! I made my choice and never regretted it. Run this survey again! Your mag is wonderful. Now if only I can find a Brave and Bold #29...

Ron Mossman, Pennsylvania

Thank You Stephen H.

Thank you Stephen H. Gentner for bringing us that great article in CBM #27, "Make Mine...All Select!"

I was pleased to see that someone has finally gotten around to writing an article about the All Select series. It has long puzzled me how under-appreciated and under-valued this eleven issue, mid-war run of Timely's, featuring Captain America, the Human Torch, and the Sub-Mariner, with Schomburg covers to boot, have remained throughout the years.

I spent over four years (1978-1982) completing this title, many of which I have never seen for sale again, particularly issue #2 which I had fortunately found quite soon into my search. Issue #11 was a real shock when it arrived in the mail. I wasn't expecting to see such an uncluttered cover featuring only one female character.

So thanks again Steve for shedding some light on this much neglected run. Hmmm, now I'm beginning to ask myself why I just

BELLA KIMELFELD CONTEST

Soooooooo... you think you know your comics?

Round four! Enter the great CBM Bella Kimelfeld Comic Book Trivia contest! Contest rules: Starting with #26, each issue of CBM will contain ten tantalizing and challenging comic trivia questions (in multiple choice format) for a total of 50 questions . The individual with the highest score wins first place! Second highest, second place, and so on until the top ten contestants are chosen. In case of a tie, a random drawing will be held to determine the winners. No employees of Gemstone Publications or Diamond Comic Distributors are eligible to enter. One entry per issue per person.

31. Uncle Scrooge's uncle's names were: a. Angus and Jacob b. McTavish and McGinty c. Cornelius and Quackly d. Hannibal and Roddy

32. The first published collection of an American comic strip was entitled: a. Yellow Kid Magazine b. Funny Folks c. Foxy Grandpa d. The Katzenjammerkids Kollection

33. Big Shot Comics (1940) DID NOT feature: a. The Dagger b. Skyman c. The Cloak d. The Face

34. Marvel's The Whizzer gained his uncanny speed by: a. An injection of mongoose blood b. Being hit by lightning in a chemical factory c. Being bathed in comet dust d. Eating a super-speed metabolism pill

35. Donald Duck's middle name is: a. Fauntleroy b. Chauncy c. Rupert d. Albert

36. Before joining the Foreign Legion, Duke O'Dowd's occupation was: a. Crack air pilot b. Chemist c. Daredevil race car driver d. Librarian

37. The Detective Chimp's name was a. Bobo b. Cheeta c. Kanga d. Tobo

38. The radio voice of Superman was: a. Bud Collyer b. Bill Cullen c. Gary Moore d. Don Ameche

39. Spyman's real name is: a. Johnny Chance b. Lucky Kerrigan c. Ace Cardman d. Flint Grannito

40. Coo Coo comics featured the origin of: a. Super Mouse b. Mighty Duck c. Speedy Rabbit d. The Bird Brain

PRIZES PRIZES PRIZES

I'll bet you thought we were putting you on and never were going to announce the prizes. Hoo-Hah... fooled ya! We actually do have some pretty neat prizes for this furshingliner contest, and here they are:

First place winner will receive -

✔ A publishers presentation bound volume of Comic Book Marketplace #1-13.

✔ A publishers presentation bound volume of Comic Book Marketplace #14-21.

✔ An editors presentation bound volume of Comic Book Marketplace #22-29.

✔ A genuine official certificate, suitable for framing, that proves to everyone in your neighborhood that you were actually the first place winner (assuming you want to make this public information.

2nd and 3rd place will receive -

✔ An editors presentation bound volume of Comic Book Marketplace #22-29.

✔ A genuine official certificate, suitable for framing, that proves to everyone in your neighborhood that you were actually a winner.

didn't write it myself at some point during those many years of waiting. Sincerely,

John Russell, Connecticut

Vig & The Knight

When it does come to saying who survived the "hero drought" of the late '40s to '50s, some people just mention Superman and Batman. Some people add Wonder Woman. Some people overlook Green Arrow and Aquaman because they were back-up characters, (Green Arrow and Aquaman were in Adventure Comics; Green Arrow was also in World's Finest). To her credit, Michelle Nolan thought to consider Blackhawk.

I'm one of the few people who considers Congo Bill, who was a back-up in Action Comics and received his own series in 1954, while originally just an adventurer, he did get a magic ring… and Superboy, who (of course) was Superman.

In this "lost age" of the late '40s to '50s, two heroes outlived most of the Justice League of America, though this is largely ignored today. These two heroes were the Shining Knight and the Vigilante. The Knight was in Adventure Comics, and Vigilante was in Action Comics (with appearances in Western Comics and Leading Comics). Vig made it to Action Comics #198 in 1954. The Knight made it to Adventure #169.

Vig was revived first, but not until JLA #78, 1970. This is ironic, since he only missed the Silver Age by two years. It is possible that they couldn't come up with a sci-fi slant to him, as the Earth-1 Vig in JLA #78 was an almost exact counterpart to Earth-2's Vig, who was brought to the modern day by time travel in JLA #100. (A sci-fi slant was done for the Flash and GL.) These post 1949 stories have been so ignored that they do not seem to be part of post-Zero Hour continuity.

Another hero who made it to the Silver Age was Lev Gleason's Daredevil, Bart Hill, "the most powerful super-hero who didn't have powers", (Amazing Heroes' letter page, #202), first appeared in Silver Streak #6 and was last seen in Daredevil #134, 1956. His own book lasted 15 years, with work by Charles Biro, Jack Cole, and Norman Mauter; and sales of 6,000,000 copies monthly.

So, for a list of super-heroes who survived the Golden Age to the Silver Age (or a least the Silver Age's "blight", the Comics Code, using a broad definition), could include; Superboy/Man, Batman, Wonder Woman, Aquaman, Green Arrow, the Blackhawks, Congo Bill/Congorilla, Plastic Man… and Daredevil!

John McDonagh, Massachusetts

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Completely Enthralled

While CBM never fails to deliver, certain issues sometimes connect more than others; CBM #27 was such an issue for me. Like your Weird Comics find, I'm always surprised when you come up with an article on a title I know nothing about. I'm most appreciative of the research required to locate all those Witness stories scattered throughout years of Timely's output. Keif Fromm's excellent retracing of the three-part origin of Capt. Marvel Jr. was another case of this.

My favorite article this issue was "Nolan's Notebook". While I don't agree with her suggestion that the Silver Age started in 1959, her more important mission - exposing a great deal of quality work from the '50s - was achieved admirably. Speaking as one of the Baby Boomers a little too young to have appreciated the implications of the Code, I was completely enthralled by what appeared on those spinning racks, so much so I've never lost my fascination with our four-color world.

I also very much enjoyed Pat Calhoun's "Round Robin" interview approach towards Vin Sullivan (although a few of the interviewees didn't seem to know him very well), and I'd encourage him to use that approach again.

Tom Hamilton, Ohio

O'Kennon Trivia

I don't know if you like comic book trivia questions or not, but I thought I would send you one anyway. It would probably be tough for most people, but you may know the answer right off.

There are at least two characters in comic books that change identities by saying the words "OM MANI PADME HUM" and in both cases the words "echo" in a far off Tibetan Lamasery and the characters are changed from their civilian identities into a super person with comparable powers. The art in one even mimics the art in the other. In both instances they each have very similar green costumes. One is, of course, The Green Lama. Who is the other one? Sincerely,

Hugh O'Kennon, Virginia

Good trivia question… do any CBM readers know?

Sold Out In One Day

Hi! Enclosed is a check. Please RUSH me a copy of Comic Book Marketplace #26 (August), the issue with the Schomburg cover. I buy CBM faithfully each month from my local shop, but this issue escaped me, so I missed it! Thanks a lot!

Andy Townsend, New York

While supplies last, we can supply any CBM issue back to #22 for $4 per (postage included). Also subscriptions (which will be going up soon) can include issues back to #22! If you can't find CBM in your local store give our subscription and back issue hotline a call… we can help!

Scarce vs. Rare

It was nice to meet you, Gary, at the San Diego Show. At this time I wanted to say that the 1995 San Diego Convention was great - plenty of Golden Age books. I wanted to comment and ask a few questions regarding several topics

First, with respect to Silver Age keys ever rivaling Golden Age keys in value… nope! There are more high grade Amazing Fantasy #15s than there are Action #1s in existence. Take a look at any show and you will see many (maybe up to 40) Amazing Fantasy #15s and the like (FF #1; Showcase #4). But how many Action #1s or All American #16s or Detective #27s do you see? It's a simple issue of supply and beauty. Although Spidey is certainly more popular than the Golden Age Green Lantern, All American #16 is a genuinely rarer book and a more valuable book than Amazing Fantasy #15. If you don't think so please call me for a trade!

Second, as a collector of DC comics I am always wondering about true scarcity. A "look back" through Overstreet Guides shows some discrepancies, however. For example, Flash #104 used to be called very rare, whereas now it is called scarce. (I once saw four 104s at the same show!) Additionally, Detective #1 is listed currently as scarce (less than 30 copies) and All American #16 is listed as rare, but it is estimated that there are slightly more copies (less than 35). But on page A-19, rare is defined as 10-20 copies. Even Adventure #247 was once listed as scarce! How tough is Flash #104 and should "scarce" and "rare" be defined today?

Third, I would like to see a thorough piece in CBM on the Mile High collection. Nowadays people seem to label every book with some sort of pedigree. Pedigree books should be able to be traced back to the original owner (if not newsstand). With all of this in mind, I was wondering about the best pedigree books - Church copies. Which books were not included? Any keys? Which ones were second hand? I've read that the Mile High books can give info as to the popularity of certain comics in the Denver area during the Golden Age. What are the results? Can anything be learned about print runs and/or scarcity of certain issues/titles from this? Cheers,

Phil Carpenter, California

1) The "relative value of Golden Age and Silver Age keys in the future" continues to be a topic of enjoyable and spirited discussion. My own view is that certain Silver Keys will eventually sell for the high values now being realized for certain Golden Age keys. The big question is how much will the Golden Age keys be going for at that time? The famous Mile High (Edgar Church) Action #1 is, I believe, the most valuable comic book in existence… and will be the first to reach the million dollar plateau. But that's just my prediction, not one of us can predict the future with absolute certainty…

2) All scarcity/rarity estimates (whether by Overstreet, Gerber, or anyone else) are just that… ESTIMATES! I personally define the terms this way: Rare-Hard to find and unavailable because few copies remain in existence; Scarce-Hard to find and unavailable because the book is presently experiencing a spike in collector demand. But the definitions (whichever you choose) really don't matter that much. I feel the more germane question for collectors is "can I find the book I want in the grade I want at a price I'm willing to pay?" This topic is one of the most interesting in the hobby. I love to hear what other collectors think and feel about the subject.

3) CBM #32 will contain one of our most

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ambitious projects, namely a forum on "pedigree Comics". If you have an opinion and would like to participate, just send your comments and questions to Pedigree Forum here at CBM.

Mohawk Valley Collection

A strange turn of events occurred recently which permitted me to acquire a few books that originated in the Mohawk Valley Collection sold at Sotheby's this year, but were not sold with the Sotheby's books. After returning from the Sotheby's auction, I was talking with fellow collector, Mike Calabrese from upstate New York, telling him about my auction experience. When I told him about the nice quality runs of 500's and 600's DC comics in the Mohawk Valley Collection and how I just lost to other bidders on several lots, he was intrigued and asked me more about the origin of the collection. I filled him in on as much as Sotheby's published in their catalogue and told him I didn't know where the Mohawk Valley is. He then responded energetically, "It's here! I live in the Mohawk Valley!!" I again recited the conditions of the books and the time frame they ran. He told me it sounded a lot like the conditions of a few books a local store in Utica, NY had acquired sometime last winter. He told me this story before about a guy who came by with five Batmans from 1959/60 that were in very high grade. The seller said that he had a few hundred more books just like these if the owner was interested. The owner said sure but never saw the guy again. I began to wonder if it was possible that they could have come from the Mohawk Valley Collection and asked Mike for the issue numbers. The only three he saw were #129-#131. To verify my suspicions, I checked the Sotheby's catalog and sure enough, these three issues were missing in the run of Batman listed in the collection. We suspected that the guy who sold these books must have somehow got in touch with Sotheby's and decided to go that route instead of selling to the dealer. At my urging, Mike made a few trips to the comics shop to see what gems were left. According to him, this shop did not specialize in Gold or Silver Age, and therefore did not have much customer interest. Three of the five books were still available and Mike managed to get a small discount for purchasing all three. Mike only wanted one and sold the other two to me! I told him to pick the one he wanted most of the three and he selected #130, the origin of Robin retold. When I eventually received my two books, I was thrilled to death that they were a solid VF+ just like the other Mohawk books. Although I was unable to acquire any of the Mohawk Valley lots at Sotheby's, this small purchase helped make up for that disappointment. Thanks again Mike.

Stephen Ritter, New Mexico

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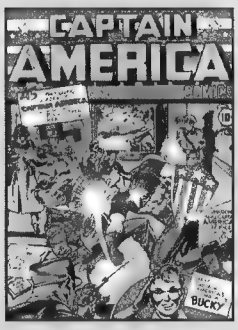

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Les Daniels Writes

In your article on The Witness (CBM #27), you suggest that the original Witness, the guy in tights from Mystic #7, lasted "only a single story". Actually, he was also around for Mystic #8 (see the splash panel, signed by "S. T. Anley", reprinted in my book Marvel: Five Fabulous Decades). And Overstreet says The Witness was also in Mystic #9.

And, incidentally, Bill Black's letter in CBM #27 mentions that Black Rider #8 features "a photo of a model" dressed as the character. Actually that model was S. T. Anley himself. As Stan said to me, people should be able to recognize him by the twinkle in his eye.

Your magazine is very enjoyable. Keep it up!

Les Daniels, Rhode Island

A Third Copy

As one of the charter subscribers to the original Comic Book Marketplace, I was as elated as everyone else to see you return to the ranks of comic fandom publishing. Pat Calhoun's "Adventures into Weird Words" had become a staple in my monthly reading. The only thing I had ever found missing

was articles on the Disney comics, especially our beloved Ducks!

CBM #27 resolved that, in part, with Michael Naiman's excellent overview of the Junior Woodchucks. For the record, I am in possession of a third copy of the 1973 Danbury Press' "Junior Woodchucks' Guide", which I stumbled upon at a flea market in Louisville, Kentucky about 10 years ago, and paid all of 50¢ for a near-mint copy. I have yet to see another copy since then.

A few items of note concerning the Junior Woodchucks' comic series not covered in the article, as most of us die-hard Disney Duck comic collectors know all too well, the hardest issues to find are those published by Whitman from early 1980 to sometime in 1983 or 1984. For the Junior Woodchucks series, these are issue numbers 62 through 81, the last issue in the series. These are all either reprints of the earlier issues, or otherwise non-Barksian. Also, the Junior Woodchucks were in all of the Huey, Dewey & Louie "Back to School" Dell Giant specials from 1958 through 1961 (one per year for four years), although I don't think Barks was involved with any of these stories, either.

I had never noticed before writing that you are in Coronado. While in the Navy in the early 1970's, I was stationed at NAS North Island, and lived off-base in the shadow of the Hotel Del (around 9th and "C" or "D", if I remember correctly). I paid $75 for your basic "deficiency" one roomer. But at least it gave me the opportunity to attend several of the first few San Diego Comic Conventions, (I had actually moved in town the weekend of the first, but could only read about it afterwards). We still have many good friends there in Coronado, and usually get back to visit every few years or so. I am trying to time one of our visits to correspond with the Comic Convention; I haven't been to one since they got really BIG.

Thanks for your time, and keep up the good work! Future Disney Duck articles will be most welcome by us "Disney-maniacs". Sincerely,

Joe Dixon, Illinois

New Grading Concept

Here's something I haven't heard discussed much before and I think it could impact on the concept of grading a book. While working on my Adam Strange article for an upcoming CBM issue, I had access to 2 copies of Showcase #19 and noticed that the printing quality on the interior pages was much better on one than on the other. Since comics which sold for 10 cents were printed using a very cheap printing process (unlike magazines like Playboy in the 50's) the plates would wear down near the end of the print run.

As a result, a book from the first half of the print run would have sharper line work and color whereas a book from the end of the print run would look faded. Therefore you can have two books in near mint condition, but the interior printing on one could be noticeably better than the other.

This is something that a collector wouldn't necessarily notice unless they were upgrading, whereupon they would compare the better condition copy with their old copy, which might surprisingly look better inside the book than the upgrade. This is also true with collecting old hardcovers which were printed using slugs of lead type. Collectors have been able to tell a first printing from a later printing because even though they look identical in every other way, the typeface shows wear on the lettering, indicating that it is later in the printing. This makes upgrading a book a whole new adventure, particularly when buying through the mail.

I'm glad to see that the new CBM is stressing the inherent value of comics first and their monetary value second. While monetary value is an inescapable issue, especially in the face of the steep rise in prices on Golden Age and Silver Age since 1987 (can you say "It happened overnight?"), the fact remains that unless a collector truly appreciates what the book has inside of it, you might as well be collecting coins.

Comics were created to be read, and I can't imagine that someone who wants only the highest grade condition actually reading the book. I have the feeling that a lot of books which change hands these days from the Gold and Silver Age are treated like stocks and bonds and are put away until they mature even more.

I applaud your articles on little known characters like the Witness and little known books like Science Comics. Unfortunately, unlike the early '70s, one can't just go out and pick up a few examples of these to read and enjoy. It's nice to know about them, though.

James Van Hise, California

Nisei Camps In Comics?

While reading Marvel Mystery Comics #49 (November 1943), I came upon a Sub-Mariner story called "Unveiling the Evil Eyes of Death." The plot involves Namor taking a vacation from his busy activities on the war front by taking a trip to the desert (?!?)

Naturally, all is not well there, and while Subby's poking around for clues he pays a visit to the local Nisei camp! I'd never heard of this particular facet of our War effort being portrayed in the comics of the day, other than this. Does anyone know of other instances where the US run Japanese internment camps are depicted in comics?

Considering the current opinion on these camps, I'm curious to know how many other comics "endorsed" them at the time. I've included scans of the relevant panels from MM #49. I love your magazine, and enjoy reading about the seemingly boundless wonders of the Golden and Silver Ages. Keep it up!

Tim Kocher, Illinois

(*continued on page 78*)

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Jungle
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76 VG $35
109 FN $35
116 GD/VG $20
118 VG $25
127 FN/VF $60
136 FN $40
140 FN $45

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11 GD $175
12 GD/VG $245
17 GD $125
20 VG $200
22 VG $170
23 VG (no centerfold) $50
24 FN/VF $320
25 GD 125
26 VF $550
30 FN $220
40 VG $40
49 FN/VF $160
50 FN/VF $175
52 FN/VF $200
54 VF $300
56 VF $250
57 FN/VF (store stamp) $225
58 FN/VF (store stamp) $225
59 FN/VF $230
60 VG/FN $130
61 VG $85
62 VF/NM $225
63 VF/NM $225
64 FN $125
66 GD/VG $55
69 VG/FN $125
71 VG/FN $70
73 FN $140

Rangers
18 FN/VF $95
30 VF- $80
35 FN/VF $80
39 FN/VF $60
40 FN/VF $65
60 VG (spine roll) $25

Sheena
3 VG $160
7 VF $165

Wings
16 VG $70
23 GD/VG $35
25 GD/VG $35
30 FR $15
67 VF $65
77 VG/FN $35
103 VG (spine roll) $22
124 VG $10

AVON

Geronimo 3 VG/FN $25
Prison Break 1 FN $120
Saint 8 FN/VF $75
Slave Girl 1 FN $280
Slave Girl 2 VG $150
Strange Worlds 1 FN $175
White Princess 2 FN/VF $75

FOX

JoJo
15 FN/VF $275
19 VG/FN (tape) $110
20 FN $150
26 VG $145
27 GD/VG $80

Rulah
20 FN $200
20 GD/VG $65
21 FN $200
24 VG/FN $160
25 GD/VG $75
26 VG/FN $150
27 VG/FN $160

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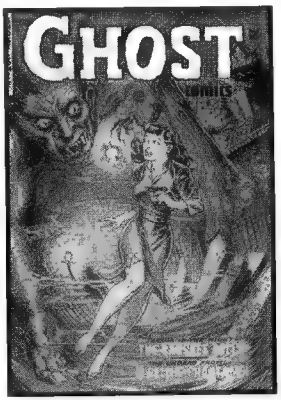
The **Ghost** Story

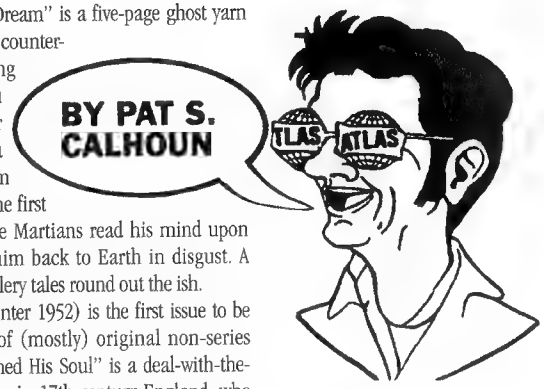
In **Ghost #1**, dated Winter 1951, we find Fiction House's first horror comic. It consists of four stories that are either reprints or unpublished episodes of the Ghost Gallery series that ran in *Jumbo Comics* from 1942 through 1953. Ghost Gallery was the first significant horror series! The stories sometimes feature narrator Drew Murdoch, but for the most part they are stand-alone supernatural stories of the kind that would later appear from many publishers in the early 1950s.

Ghost #2 (Spring 1952) is structured like #1, with four Ghost Gallery yarns. Both of these issues- like most of the 11-issue run- have fabulous covers by Maurice Whitman, who also did many of the later-issue covers of *Jumbo, Planet,* and *Fight,* etc.

Ghost #3 (Summer 1952) has two Ghost Gallery yarns. One of them, "Dark Eyes of Destiny", is an excellent tale about a pair of antique eyeglasses that show the wearer scenes of impending tragedies before they occur. Drew Murdoch finally discovers that these glasses are the property of Death himself. Issue #3 also contains two Werewolf Hunter stories. This series appeared in *Rangers Comics* for several years in the mid-1940s. The first episode deals with a spider-woman femme fatale, who holds secret ceremonies in some strange temple where all the men she has turned into spiders crawl out of their crevices and caress her. Wow! Professor Broussard, the "werewolf hunter" and narrator is another "ghost-buster" sort of guy who gets a lot of chances to ply his trade. Broussard's second offering is almost as appealing; it's about an old woman who weaves portraits into little rugs, and the people pictured soon meet with sudden death! This one's noteworthy for bizarre panel layouts that give a contorted look to a contorted situation. Again, I think these are reprints.



Ghost #4 (Fall 1952) breaks new ground for Fiction House. For the first time they used totally stand-alone stories with no continuing characters, or narrators, or framing sequences, just stories, like most other companies had been doing for several years. "Death Is A Dream" is a five-page ghost yarn amongst spies and counter-spies in modern Hong Kong. The second story, "No World For Me", tells how a murderer on the lam ends up alone on the first rocket to Mars. The Martians read his mind upon arrival and send him back to Earth in disgust. A couple of Ghost Gallery tales round out the ish.



Ghost #5 (Winter 1952) is the first issue to be totally composed of (mostly) original non-series stories. "Satan Owned His Soul" is a deal-with-the-devil tale of a judge in 17th century England, who sentences innocent people to hang to further his own schemes. It's solid, if not surprising. A couple of the stories here may still be reprints, series stories retitled to stand-alone (I say this because Professor Broussard appears in one of them).

Ghost #6 (Spring 1953) boasts a Whitman cover that shines out even in this run of exquisite covers. A blonde in bondage, a ghoul, a gun, and a ghost add up to a memorable if not meaningful scene. The stories in this issue include the well-drawn "Zandini Did It", a nifty supernatural crime yarn with art by A. Albert; "Payoff Blues", hardboiled horror in the grand tradition, illustrated by Jack Kamen; and "Two Must Die", a story of bad Americano business-men trapped by their own greed and the ancient magic of Mexico.

Ghost #7 (Summer 1953) has another killer cover and some good stories too. "When Dead Rogues Ride" tells of an old-country thief who impersonates the 20-years-dead Black Bart to terrify his victims into submission. And, slowly, he becomes the dead highwayman... "The Gallows Ghosts" is a standard "spirits of vengeance" story, but the snazzy 1950s avant-garde art by Bill Discount puts a worthwhile spin on it. "Who Called Us Back?" is the tale of grave-robbers who unwittingly open a coffin containing two ancient demons of the undead. This one has vivid art by Johnny Bell that really enhances the mood of supernatural dread. The

Eleven great issues in the pre-code horror hall-of-fame!

GHOST #1 (WINTER 1951) An alluring lady in red runs in terror from ghostly fiends in a graveyard scene by Maurice Whitman. This was Fiction House's first horror comic.

GHOST © FICTION HOUSE MAGAZINE

creators of these stories in *Ghost* were also the people who produced the material for the last three (and the only non-series) issues of *Planet Comics* at this same time.

Ghost #8 (Fall 1953) also has a classic cover; this one is initialed MW, and has all the great Whitman touches. Plus, this cover blurbs the insides as "all new eerie mysteries", a clear message that they wanted readers to know these were not reprints. "Curse of the Mist-Things" tells of gypsies who wander beyond the grave; it's illustrated by the energetic Bell. "Return Engagement" is another ghost story (like one would expect in a mag titled *Ghost*), but, again, Discount's art gives it some extra cool. And "The Soul Stealer" has a nifty twisted ending.

Ghost #9 (Winter 1953) again offers "all new eerie mysteries". "The Devil Seeds" is a savage yarn of war against monster plants, rendered blow-by-blow by Bell. Discount and Albert are present in this issue too, and the team of Bill Benulis and Jack Abel is also here with "The Thing That Walked at Night", which demonstates their ability for tasty illustration. These two were part of the "stable" that includes most of the others mentioned, and gave *Ghost* a good feeling- much like EC or pre-hero-Marvel where the artistic line-up remained steady and roughly the same each issue.

Ghost #10 (Spring 1954) has a nice cover that looks like Whitman's work. The "all new" blurb remains, although this issue does contain a reprint: one of the great Dr. Drew series by Jerry Grandenetti from *Rangers Comics*. This series, drawn under a heavy Will Eisner influence (specifically- the Spirit), is maybe the best ghost-buster of them all. Grandenetti, (who worked with Eisner), liberally borrows such Spirit techniques as the elaborate title staging- often with the words worked into the splash panel- and some of the playful and inventive atmosphere that made the Spirit such a delight. Other highlights include some engaging Bell art for "The Ghost of the Gorgon", an OK yarn, and "Halfway to Hades", a good ghost story.

Ghost #11 (Summer 1954) is the last issue of the title and one of the last Fiction House comics. Given that sex and violence had been a company trademark since "day one", continuing under the coming restrictions of the Comics Code Authority would have been impossible. And, it's too bad, because Fiction House was turning out some of their better books at the end, still fresh with the excitement of their late entry into the new (non-series) style of storytelling. Inside are two originals and two reprints. "Lords of the Upper Air" is a predictable "abominable snowman" yarn, impressive only due to Bell's efforts. But the Benulis/Abel "Grab Bag" is both a slick story and has distinctive drawing. "There's a Werewolf Hunter" with George Evans art, and "The Witch's Doll" is a Dr. Drew tale of voodoo, told with the pyrotechnic skill that makes this such a fine series.

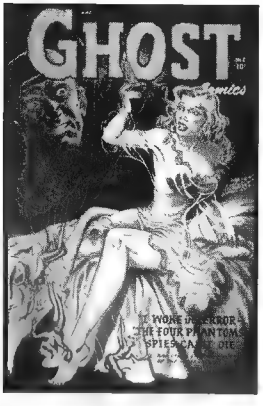
All in all, the eleven issues of *Ghost* comprise an impressive run. It certainly delivered what it promised. The reprints were all worthy of being reprinted, and the original material was well-written and handsomely drawn. Having a regular line-up of artists on stand-alone genre anthology stories gave the books the same kind of structured expectation that continuing character series did. This title and this company stand as memorable victims of the censorship movement of the early 1950s. Hence this salute to the ghost of *Ghost*. ■

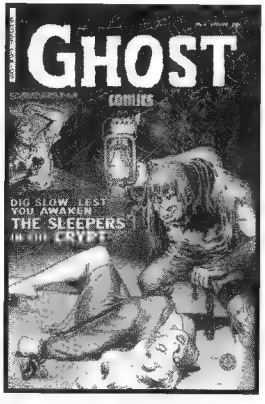
GHOST #2 (SPRING 1952)
And when she woke up- the nightmare kept right on going... The puppet-master from beyond snares another soul in his strings on this effective Maurice Whitman cover.

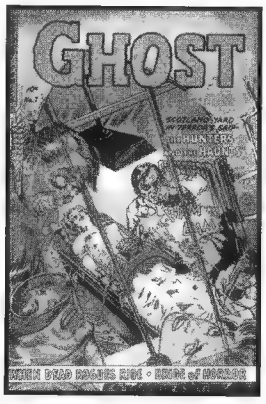
GHOST #6 (SPRING 1953)
Whitman really hit his stride in 1953, with all four quarterly issues of Ghost featuring excellently lurid supernatural scenes. The phantom face leering in the background is a recurring motif on these covers.

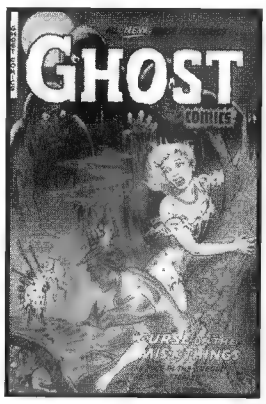
GHOST #7 (SUMMER 1953)
The mad scientist cannot escape the spirits of those he has killed... It's more Whitman magic with good color scheming on the three transparent faces.

GHOST #8 (FALL 1953)
Swamp voodoo, Whitman style, makes for elegantly achieved menace on this cover illustrating "Curse of the Mist Things".









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4 FR/GD $15
14 FN- $45
27 VG $55

Amazing Detective
14 FN $70

Amazing Ghost Stories
15 VG/FN $75

Baffling Mysteries
17 VF $100
(inside pages tan)

Beware (Trojan)
14 GD/VG $55

Beware Terror Tales
1 FN $140
7 VG/FN $60

Black Cat Mystery
32 VF/NM $100
35 VG- $40
37 VG- $45

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22 (1954) VG $45

Chilling Tales
13 (#1) VG++ $110
17 VG/FN $110

Crime Mysteries
1 VG $125

Dark Mysteries
14 mct o/w FN $45
16 VG+ $50

Eerie (1951)
1 VG/FN $170
2 VG- $8
4 VG $70

Eerie Adventures
1 FN/VF $100

Ghost
2 FR/GD $45
7 VG $35

Hand of Fate
15 FN/VF $75

Haunted Thrills
11 FN/VF $70

Hooded Menace
nn VG+ $100

House of Mystery
31 FN- $40

Journey into Fear
9 VG/FN $85
11 VG+ $50
12 VG- $45
17 GD $25
20 VG- $35
21 VG- $35

Journey into Mystery
15 VG $80

Journey into Unk. Worlds
19 GD/VG $40

Marvel Tales
111 VG-/VG $50
114 VG+ $55

Mister Mystery
13 VG $85

Monster Crime
1 FR $80

Mys. Weird & Strange
1 VG/FN $120
8 FN++ $75
9 VG- (cov. loose) $30

Mysterious Adventures
3 FN $75
6 VG/FN $60
11 FN- $100
15 VG/FN $85
21 GD/VG $55

Mystic
5 VG+ $65
10 FN $100
24 VG+ $35
29 VG/FN $40

Out of the Night
4 VG+ $65
5 VG+ $45

Shadow
V3#11 VG+ $85
V4#2 VG- $95
V7#11 VG $65

Star Spangled Comics
122 VG $90

Strange Fantasy
12 FN $65

Strange Mysteries
2 VG $50
5 VG(2) $55
7 FN $70
13 VG $40
18 GD/VG $30
19 VG/FN $60

Strange Tales
27 GD/VG $45

Strange Terrors
2 FN- $75
3 VG+ $65
7 VG+ $70

Suspense
10 VG $50
16 VG $40

Suspense Detective
4 GD/VG $30

Tales of Terror (Toby)
1 VG- $60

Thing
11 FN/VF $155
13 VG $140

This Magazine is Haunted
4 VG $45
10 VG/FN $145

Tomb of Terror
1 VG $45

Uncanny Tales
1 GD-/GD $75
15 FN $55
16 VG $45
18 VG $45
27 VG+ $35

Voodoo
13 VG $45

Web of Evil
5 VG- $160
6 FN $80

Web of Mystery
7 FN- $50
9 FN+ $50
16 VG+ $40

Weird Horrors
9 VG/FN $80

Witchcraft
6 VG/FN $50

Witches Tales
1 FN- $85
1 FN- $85
3 FN/VF $45
6 FN/VF $65
21 FN/VF $40

Sensation (Romance) Comics!

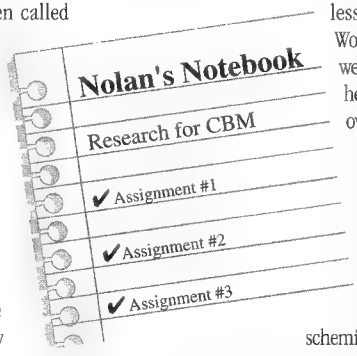
DC's unique "all-Girl" issues of Sensation Comics

BY MICHELLE NOLAN

Back in the days of mass comic book confusion, when publishers were trying anything and everything to replace super heroes in the late 1940s and early 50s, DC Comics made a vain, but unique and little-known effort to appeal to female readers.

Not many collectors realize that DC, then known as National Comics Publications, Inc., tried a two-year experiment with all-heroine issues of *Sensation Comics*, one of the last holdout super hero anthologies from the Golden Age. It failed, but not because the comics lacked quality. If you've ever seen an issue of *Sensation Comics* #94 (Nov/Dec 1949) through #106 (Nov/Dec 1951), you'll probably agree they're pretty nice examples of story and art for the period.

The problem now, and perhaps the problem then, was that not many readers have seen many, if any, of these late Sensation issues. They obviously didn't sell well, and they're among the scarcest DCs from the period. They might as well have been called *Sensation Romance Comics*, because that's more or less what they were. They suffered from a double whammy-super heroines were just as passé as super heroes in 1950-51, and romance comics suffered from the "Love Glut" of 1950 (see last issue).



These scarce issues of *Sensation* have an unusual crossover appeal, to collectors of super heroes (Wonder Woman), science fiction comics (Astra, Girl of the Future), and romance titles (Romance, Inc.). I'm also going to nominate one of them for the distinction of being the rarest early 1950s DC!

But first, let's back up a bit, to the 1943-47 period. Superman and Batman were only two of a "Big Five" set of DC/All-American Publications heroes. During that period, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, and The Flash received just as much (and sometimes even a bit more) exposure.

All five heroes appeared in three regular comic books, including monthly anthology titles, their own bi-monthly comics, and a thick 15-cent bi-monthly title–*World's Finest* for Superman and Batman, and *Comic Cavalcade* for the other three heroes, who were creations of M.C. Gaines' All-American branch of what eventually became a unified DC line in the mid-1940s. In addition, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, and The Flash all appeared regularly during most of the run of *All-Star Comics*.

By mid-1949, however, Green Lantern and The Flash were gone, except for their appearance in the bi-monthly *All-Star Comics* (a truly strange situation in its own right). But Wonder Woman continued to hold down the lead spot in *Sensation*, right up until it was converted to a short-lived horror/mystery title with issue #107 (Jan/Feb 1952).

Even so, DC's editors also had sent all the other old *Sensation* heroes into limbo by mid 1949. Among those turned-out-to-pasture strips were Wildcat, Sargon the Sorcerer, Little Boy Blue (a kid hero group strip that has to be seen to be believed!), and the Black Pirate.

This was followed by cutting *Sensation* from a monthly to a bi-monthly with issue #93. It seems apparent that the editors tried hard to save *Sensation*, since it was the only one of the original "Big Eight" monthly anthology titles to continue on a bi-monthly basis. The others were either continued as monthlies, changed titles or genres, or were discontinued.

What DC did with *Sensation Comics* from issues #94-#106 remains a most curious experiment, although perhaps sales reports from Wonder Woman's own bi-monthly title had indicated that it might succeed. It's generally believed that Wonder Woman sold fewer than half as many issues as Superman and Batman (and, indeed, a lot less than that during the 1960s), nevertheless Wonder Woman still must have been selling fairly well in the early 1950s, or DC would not have made her one of only three super heroes to retain their own titles.

Sensation not only became an "all-girl" comic (in those days, "girl" and "woman" were virtually synonymous), but it tried melding a variety of female features in an obvious attempt to lure the market of girls who had recently been captured by the creation of the romance genre.

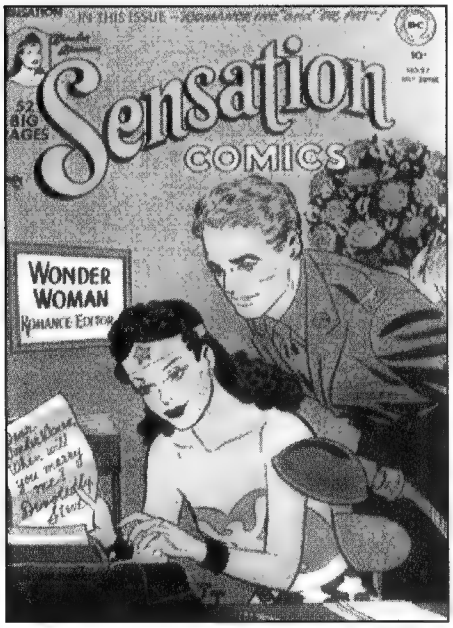
These, however, were not the helpless, scheming and/or dreamy-eyed "girls" that most of those romance comics portrayed. These were women of strength and courage, uncommon in the comics of the period. The *Sensation* lineup included Wonder Woman, Dr. Pat, Ann Martin of Romance, Inc., and Astra (who didn't appear until issue #99). Even before the latter three features made their debuts, however, a well-written non-costumed detective dubbed "Lady Danger" had a 10-issue run in *Sensation* #84-#93.

The first six Lady Danger stories in *Sensation* #84-#89 were drawn in the fashion of Milton Caniff, Lee Elias, and/or Alex Toth and even today hold up well. The last four Lady Danger tales, in contrast, suffered from abysmally "cartoony" art, which seemed terribly out of place in the relatively slick DC line of the late 1940s.

The thirteen Wonder Woman stories in *Sensation* #94-#106 reflect an odd shift in emphasis, as though the editors sensed that trying to transform the title into *Sensation Romance Comics* wasn't really going to work. Wonder Woman resumed battling the usual blend of fantastic villains beginning with issue #99 (and you've never seen such an utterly bizarre and fantastic collection of bad guys until you've read the Golden Age Wonder Woman!). In contrast, her stories in issues #94-#98 were, pure and simple, tales of romantic adventure.

ROMANTIC THEMES take over many of the covers of later Sensation Comics. Here Steve Trevor acts the gentlemen ala Sir Walter Raleigh and looks on while Wonder Woman begins her new assignment as Romance editor.

©DC



The cover of *Sensation Comics* #94 (drawn by Bob Oksner, who did so much gorgeous work on DC's teen humor titles and drew all 13 "all-girl" *Sensation* covers) is a radical departure from the previous 93 issues. Wonder Woman's sweetheart, Steve Trevor, is shown carrying her across a stream as she sweetly smiles in a classic "my hero" pose. When I first saw this cover many years ago, my first reaction was something like "Huh? She could leap that stream without even trying! She must be trying to make Steve feel useful!"

Seldom, if ever, had a long-running comic made such a drastic shift in cover style while still using the same character. In all of the previous 93 issues of *Sensation*, Wonder Woman is portrayed as the indomitable Amazon she was, drawn by H. G. Peter (who continued the interior art for issues #94-#106, thereby accounting for some of the differences between the covers and the stories). Nor was she ever portrayed in such a position on the cover of her own title, even during this period. But now, suddenly, she needs to be carried across a stream! As the Amazon herself might say, "Suffering Sappho!" The scene does not appear in the story, a romantic tale in which Steve's heroics still can't convince Wonder Woman to marry him.

The cover blurbs for issue #94 also heralded all the new features. More on them in a moment, but let's continue our look at how Wonder Woman was developing.

On the cover of *Sensation* #95, Steve removes the glasses from Diana Prince and accuses her if being Wonder Woman — with a portrait of Wonder Woman on the wall above the pair. Once again, this cover is unique in the series. In the romantic story inside, Wonder Woman finds a way to convince Steve that she is not Diana Prince.

The cover of issue #96 is the most unusual of all. Wonder Woman wears five different costumes, including her own, the other four of which all would appeal to teen girls. It's another romantic tale, about how Steve is forced to choose between kissing Diana and Wonder Woman, who, of course, is playing both roles at hyper speed at a charity bazaar. Steve kisses Diana, but only to spare her the humiliation of not being his real choice! It's a frustrating situation for Wonder Woman, because she knows that Steve must fall in love with her as Diana, since by Amazon law she would have to become Diana if she married, rather than remain Wonder Woman.

By now, you're probably beginning to get the idea that these stories represented a quantum leap from the usual Wonder Woman epics! The cover of *Sensation* #97, though, is the most romantic of all, with Steve offering a bouquet of roses as Wonder Woman begins to answer his plea to wed. On the wall is her new title: "Wonder Woman, Romance Editor". She takes over (for a frazzled series of men who couldn't do the job!) as editor of the "Hopeless Hearts Department" of the Daily Globe... but eventually realizes once again that the world needs her more than Steve does.

One can picture teen girls reading this story with total empathy, and teen boys absolutely refusing to buy this issue! It's not hard to imagine the ribbing a boy of 1950 would have received with a copy of *Sensation* #97 rolled up in his back pocket! It took me forever to find this issue, with its purple(!) cover, and it has to be one of the scarcest of all DCs. *Danger Trail* #3, published a few months after *Sensation* #97, is alleged to be the rarest of all pre-Silver Age DC comics... but I've seen at least six copies of *Danger Trail* #3, and I've never seen another copy of *Sensation* #97! I know of two other collectors who have one (including Ye editor), but I've never seen another copy. I've been trying to upgrade my "good" copy for more than 10 years without luck! All of which is my way of sneaking into

SENSATION COMICS
PRICE VS. RARITY

Collector's Tip

Even though many of the later *Sensation Comics* are listed in the Guide at relatively low values, savvy collectors know that the later issues are usually more difficult to find. These later issues are also much harder to locate in grade.

this article my nomination for the rarest early 1950s DC: *Sensation* #97! (Reader feedback on this question is appreciated and welcome.)

The story in *Sensation* #98 is another romantic opus, but the cover returns Wonder Woman to a more typically action-filled role, saving three circus acrobats along with Steve Trevor. Oddly, she is referred to as "Romance Editor" as though that was the job she had held for many years instead of only in the previous issue. This is the last of the truly "romantic" Wonder Woman stories, for in her remaining appearances in *Sensation* she goes back to spending most of her time battling unusual menaces.

Sensation Comics #99 (Sep/Oct 1950) carries a house ad for *Strange Adventures* #1, DC's first all science fiction title, and also marks the debut of Astra, Girl of the Future. She became the fourth regular female feature in *Sensation,* replacing short fillers, and may well have been originally slated for *Strange Adventures* or *Mystery In Space*. Both DC sci fi titles contained on going series in the vein of Astra, making this a logical hypotheses.

Astra was a character of great potential, but, alas, she appeared in only eight stories, through issue #106. In 1950, the concept of a female "ace telecaster" was radical indeed, but Astra foreshadows many of the women who work in the media today, especially on the likes of MTV's youth-oriented shows. Even so, DC's editors gave her a "Rockette" with which to zoom around New Futura and other space lanes… all while working for Trans-Video News in the 22nd century. The "Rockette" clearly indicated that a mere woman could not be trusted with a real rocket ship! Suffering Sappho no! (With apologies to Wonder Woman.)

I first read an Astra story as a 10-year-old in 1958… in a second-hand issue. Since that first encounter with the girl of the future, I've lamented the fact that she never had a long-running series. In my book, Astra is the best undeveloped character in DC history. I also enjoyed the Dr. Pat stories as they were romantic adventures of a female physician. It was also an innovative concept in comics at the time, but Dr. Pat's run lasted only for the 13 "all-girl" issues. She had all sorts of adventures, drawn and told well. But, without the lure of the fantastic, her strip probably was doomed from the beginning. Nevertheless, it's just another reason I love DC comics of this period!

The Romance, Inc., stories, with kindly middle-aged counselor Ann Martin serving as hostess in much the same way as the Old Witch in horror tales over at EC, were good examples of the genre. Romance, Inc., which made a few appearances in DC romance titles, had much more complicated romantic epics than the average love comics. DC's own love comics, while beautifully drawn throughout the 1950s, soon became much too simplistic to accommodate complicated tales like Ann Martin told. Interestingly, Ann Martin predates newspaper advice columnist Ann Landers (a pen name) by several years! I guess "Ann" just sounds like someone you'd want to tell your troubles to!

On a final note, the *Gerber Photo-Journal* lists *Sensation* #94 and #104 with a scarcity index of "6" the remaining issues described above as 4's or 5's. I couldn't disagree more! If you want to know why, just try putting together a run of these scarce little gems! Why, it might even take a Superman–or a Wonder Woman! ■

Michelle Nolan is a nationally recognized collector and researcher of comic books from the '40s through the '60s. She has one of the most extensive collections of 1950's comic books in the United States.

CBM CHECKLIST

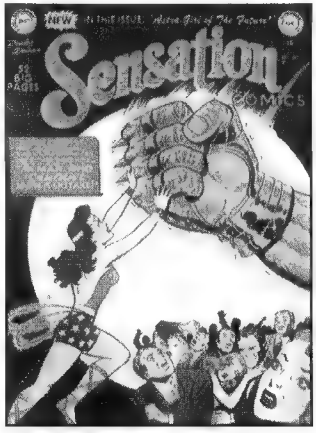
Sensation Comics of the 1950s

#94 (Nov/Dec 1949)
Wonder Woman "SOS Wonder Woman!" 12 pgs.
Headline Heroines "Omaha Creek is Flooding" 4 pgs.
Romance, Inc. "Farewell, My Heart" 10 pgs.
Text Story "The Unread Letter" (romance story)" 2 pgs.
Dr. Pat "A Cure for Romance" 10 pgs.

#95 (Jan/Feb 1950)
Wonder Woman "The Unmasking of Wonder Woman" 10 pgs.
Dr. Pat "Dr. Pat's First Love!" 10 pgs.
Headline Heroines "Helen Churchill Candee (Titanic survivor, author)" 4 pgs.
In the Grove (young musicians of accomplishment) 2 pgs.
Text Story "Strange Meeting (a romance story)" 2 pgs.
Romance, Inc. "Dream Sweetheart" 12 pgs.

#96 (Mar/Apr 1950)
Wonder Woman "Wonder Woman's Romantic Rival" 12 pgs.
Dr. Pat "Report for Romance " 10 pgs.

continued



MENACING CREATURES FROM DISTANT GALAXIES and parallel dimensions are also a recurring cover theme in later Sensation Comics.

©DC

CHECKLIST CONT.

Sensation Comics

Headline Heroines "Helen R. Sullivan (heroine of hotel fire)" 4 pgs.
Beautiful but Not Dumb (young women of accomplishment) 2 pgs.
Text Story "Chance Meeting (a romance story)" 2 pgs.
Romance, Inc. "You Can't Bargain with Love!" 12 pgs.

#97 (May/Jun 1950)
Wonder Woman "Wonder Woman, Romance Editor" 12 pgs.
Headline Heroines "Gwendolyn Garvin" (died trying to save drowning victim) 4 pgs.
Dr. Pat "Case of the Absent-Minded Doctor" 10 pgs.
Beautiful but Not Dumb (young women of accomplishment) 1 pg.
Text Story "The Easter Egg" (history of Easter eggs) 2 pgs.
Romance, Inc. "Vacation from Love" 10 pgs.

#98 (Jul/Aug 1950)
Wonder Woman "Wonder Woman's Strange Mission!" 12 pgs.
Dr. Pat "Operation Cupid" 10 pgs.
Headline Heroines "Margie Jean Snyder" (died saving children from fire) 4 pgs.
Busy Belles (young women of accomplishment) 1 pg.
Text Story "Fruit of the Rose" (the Rose family) 2 pgs.
Romance, Inc. "Once in Love, Always in Love" 10 pgs.

#99 (Sep/Oct 1950)
Wonder Woman: "The Man Who Couldn't Make a Mistake" 12 pgs.
Dr. Pat "Danger Has Two Faces" 10 pgs.
Astra, Girl of the Future "The Strange Color Out of Space" 6 pgs.
Text Story "Bread Time Story" (the history of bread) 2 pgs.
Romance, Inc. "The Failure of Romance, Inc.!" 8 pgs.

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#100 (Nov/Dec 1950)
Wonder Woman "Wonder Woman, Hollywood Star" 12 pgs.
Dr. Pat "Dr. Pat...Flight Surgeon!" 10 pgs.
Beautiful but Not Dumb (young women of accomplishment) 2 pgs.
Astra, Girl of the Future "The Invader from the Ninth Planet!" 8 pgs.
Text Story "Gifts Through the Ages" 2 pgs.
Romance, Inc. "This Love is Mine" 8 pgs.

#101 (Jan/Feb 1951)
Wonder Woman "Battle for the Atom World" 12 pgs.
Dr. Pat "The Case of the Mechanical Brain" 10 pgs.
Astra, Girl of the Future "Conquerors of the Flame" 8 pgs.
Circus Cuties (young women of the circus) 1 pg.
Text Story "Wings Across the Sea (sea-going birds)" 2 pgs.
Romance, Inc. " Castaway Heart! " 8 pgs.

#102 (Mar/Apr 1951)
Wonder Woman "Queen of the South Seas!" 12 pgs.
Dr. Pat "The Circus Queen Mystery!" 8 pgs.
Astra, Girl of the Future "The Port of Missing Space Ships!" 8 pgs.
Busy Belles (young women of accomplishment) 1 pg.
Text Story "Those Sentimental Americans" (history of Valentine cards) 2 pgs.
Romance, Inc. "Love's Where the Heart Is" 8 pgs.

#103, May/Jun 1951)
Wonder Woman "100 Year Dual" 12 pgs.
Dr. Pat "Carnival of Doom!" 8 pgs.
Astra, Girl of the Future "The Voyage of the Time Capsule" 8 pgs
Pam (teen humor) 3 pgs.
Text Story "Good Loser" (story with a moral) 2 pgs.
Romance, Inc. "False Sweethearts" 8 pgs.
In the Groove (young musicians of accomplishment) 1 pg.

#104 (Jul/Aug 1951)
Wonder Woman "The End of Paradise Island" 12 pgs.
Romance, Inc. "Love Takes a Holiday" 8 pgs. Astra, Girl of the Future "The Man Who Stole the Earth" 8 pgs.
Pam (teen humor) 3 pgs.
Text Story "The Story of Numbers (history of mathematics)" 2 pgs.
Dr. Pat "Case of the Frightened Flyer!" 10 pgs.

#105 (Sep/Oct 1951) last 52 page issue
Wonder Woman "Secret of the Giant Forest" 12 pgs.
Dr. Pat "Danger in the Everglades" 8 pgs.
Astra, Girl of the Future "SOS from Space" 8 pgs. New Stars (young show business people) 1/2 pg.
Scientific Sues (young female scientists) 1 pg.
Romance, Inc. "Take Back Your Heart" 8 pgs.

#106 (Nov/Dec 1951) first 36 page issue
Wonder Woman "The Knights of Terror" 10 pgs. Dr. Pat "The Fatal Decoy!" 6 pgs.
Text Story "Young America Takes to the Skies" (model airplane flyers) 2 pgs.
Astra, Girl of the Future "The Mad Brain" 8 pgs. ■

Not just any horror HARVEY HORROR!

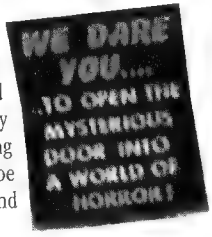
Happy ghosts and friendly witches they're not!

TOMB OF TERROR #15 (May 1954) **Mid-1954 was when the horror publishers responded to impending censorship with a last wave of outrage and extreme violence. This portrait of an exploding face is a perfect example of that overkill atmosphere.**

When one thinks of Harvey Comics, one usually conjures up images of friendly ghosts and witches and mischievous little devils that would not scare even the most timid of souls. But, did you know that during the pre-code early-1950s Harvey issued comics that were truly frightening?

When EC Comics gradually changed all of their love and humor titles to horror and crime, they created a major success story within the comic book industry that made all the other publishers stand up and take notice.

One of these companies, of course, was Harvey, which created their own series of horror titles. Like EC, they also used extant titles like *Blondie Comics* and *Black Cat* and renamed them. *Blondie* became *Chamber of Chills* and *Black Cat* became *Cat Mystery*. To compare, EC did the same thing when they renamed *Crime Patrol, Gunfighter*, and *Saddle Romances* and they became *Crypt of Terror* (later *Tales from the Crypt*), *Haunt of Fear*, and *Vault Of Horror*, respectively.



Prior to entering into the horror arena, Harvey had been publisher of superhero titles such as *Black Cat Comics, Speed Comics,* and *Champion Comics*. In the 1940s, Harvey started licensing properties as well, including "The Green Hornet", "Sad Sack", "Joe Palooka", "Dick Tracy", and "Blondie and Dagwood".

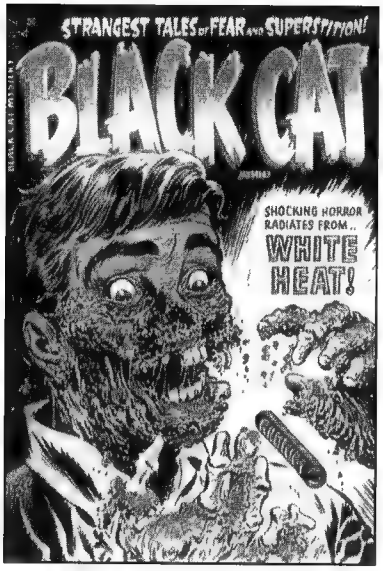
In 1950, with EC's popularity soaring, Harvey entered into the horror field with stories and artwork that actually rivaled EC. Bill Gaines (EC editor) boasted a stable of artists second to none that included legendary greats Johnny Craig, Jack Kamen, "Ghastly" Graham Ingels, and Jack Davis (just to name a few). But it is a little known fact that Harvey also had some major talent... including Bob Powell, Howard Nostrand, Rudy Palais, and Lee Elias, among others.

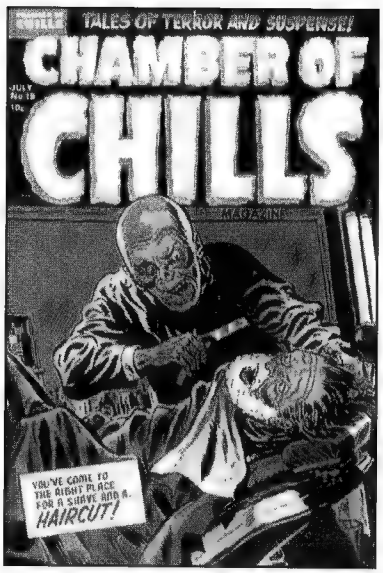
By Mark Arnold

The main difference between Harvey horror and EC horror is the absence of magazine "hosts" like EC's Crypt Keeper, Vault Keeper and The Old Witch. Harvey had no "hosts" per se, just random tales of terror, save for an unnamed witch in *Witches Tales*.

Witches Tales claims the title as the first Harvey horror comic, debuting in January, 1951 and lasting for 28 issues. Then the title was renamed *Witches Western Tales* for the final two issues, ending its run with #30 (April 1955). The title left its horror background behind when it eventually was transformed into *Western Tales* for a further three issues.

A second title joined *Witches Tales* in June when *Chamber of Chills* #21 premiered, taking its "continued" issue number from *Blondie Comics*. "Chills" continued with #22-24, then was renumbered





BLACK CAT MYSTERY #50
(Jun 1954) This Warren Kremer cover is all the more grotesque with the realization that the artist made his name drawing gentle humor features for Harvey's children's comics.

CHAMBER OF CHILLS #18
(Jul 1953) This "cutting edge" concept is typical of the genre's reliance upon the painful possibilities that sharp objects present- especially in the hands of a homicidal maniac.

collector appeal of course, but it should be noted that all of the Harvey horror titles have their fair share of these "gory" elements.

Harvey's third horror title actually began as a hero title. Then *Black Cat Comics*, was changed and it no longer featured the superheroine starlet after which the title was named. Under the new banner of *Black Cat Mystery* (issue #29) the title became one of the more interesting members of the Harvey Horror hall-of-fame. *Mystery* is specially noted because it contains the two most demanded classics (the most famous cover and the most famous story) for which Harvey horror is best remembered. These are the legendary story "Colorama" by Bob Powell in *Mystery* #45, and the classic Warren Kremer cover for *Mystery* #50 (the one with the man's face melting as he holds a bar of radium)!

After *Mystery* #53 (1954) the series reverted back to its former superhero format and lasted until 1963. It has been revived in recent years by Lorne-Harvey's *Recollections* series.

Tomb of Terror was Harvey's fourth and final horror entry. With the appearance of *Terror* in June 1952, Harvey's horror really hit its stride. *Terror* ran for 16 issues, before changing its name to *Thrills of Tomorrow* for a further four issues.

Of course, the infamous comic code put an end to all of Harvey's (and everyone else's) horror titles. By 1955, all horror comics ceased publication. It is a little known fact that two other planned Harvey horror titles, *Inferno of Fear* and *Strange Fantasy* never saw the light of publication.

starting with issue #5... continuing through #26 (December 1954). It finally become *Chamber of Clues* for the final two issues (#27 and #28).

Chills is considered by many collectors and fans as the best of the Harvey horror titles, if only for the superb Powell and Nostrand material that appeared in most of the later issues. The *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* describes *Chills* as a very graphically violent title... and goes on to say "...about half the issues contain bondage, torture, sadism, perversion, gore, cannibalism, eyes ripped out, acid in face, etc." This is part of their novelty and

HARVEY HORROR CHECKLIST

Collectible pre-Code editions that will amaze and even shock you!

Originally published in The Harveyville Fun Times. *Reprinted by permission.*

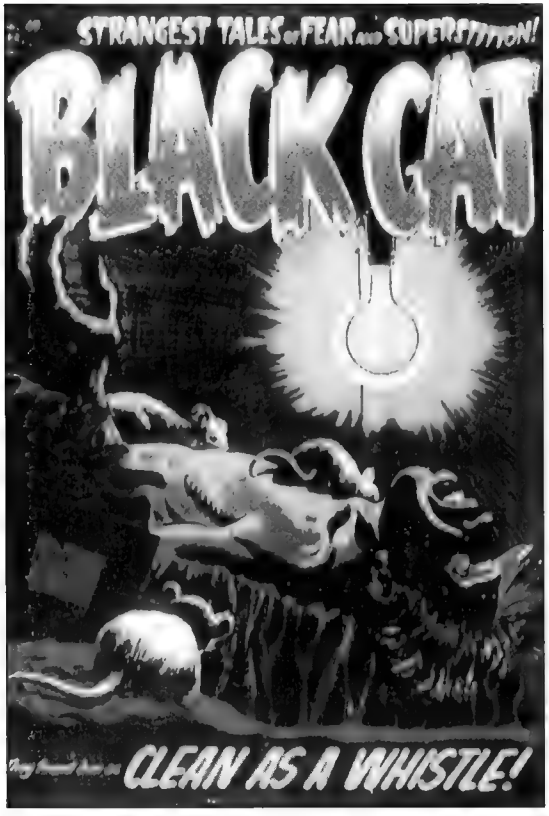
BLACK CAT MYSTERY
(formerly Black Cat Comics, becomes Black Cat Western)
29, June 1951
30, August 1951
31, October 1951
32, December 1951
33, February 1952
34, April 1952
35, May 1952
36, June 1952
37, July 1952
38, August 1952
39, September 1952
40, October 1952
41, December 1952
42, March 1953
43, April 1953
44, June 1953
45, August 1953
46, October 1953
47, December 1953
48, February 1954
49, April 1954
50, June 1954
51, August 1954
52, October 1954
53, December 1954

CHAMBER OF CHILLS
(formerly Blondie Comics, Chamber Of Clues #27-28)
21, June 1951
22, August 1951
23, October 1951
24, December 1951
5, February 1952
6, March 1952
7, April 1952
8, May 1952
9, June 1952
10, July 1952
11, August 1952
12, September 1952
13, October 1952
14, November 1952
15, January 1953
16, March 1953
17, May 1953
18, July 1953
19, September 1953
20, November 1953
21, January 1954
22, March 1954
23, May 1954
24, July 1954
25, September 1954
26, December 1954

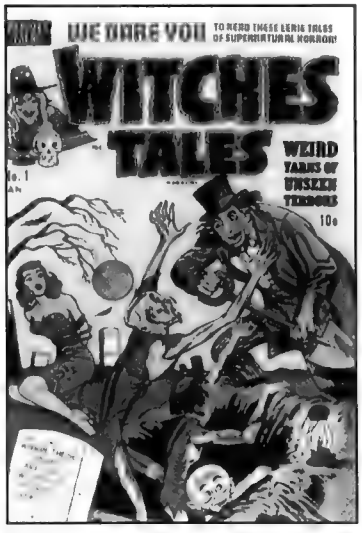
That would be the end of the Harvey story, except that some of the material was later collected and reprinted in Harvey's *Shocking Tales Digest* in 1981 and still later, Alan Harvey reprinted more material in three issues of Lorne-Harvey's horror anthology, *The Silver Scream*.

Currently, New England Comics Press has been reprinting "public domain" horror stories, many from Harvey, in its many publications like *Tales too Terrible* to *Tell* and *Buried Terror*.

Harvey's horror titles are relatively easy to find, especially since many copies surfaced from the Harvey warehouse, and were available recently from Diamond International Galleries. But, Harvey's horror does command a price comparable to EC's horror, due mostly to their excellent writing and art... all are well-worth seeking out if you are a fan of the genre. Happy Harvey hunting! ■



BLACK CAT MYSTERY #49 (Apr 1954) - **Stark imagery and subtle coloring help make this ghastly scene compelling. The story title, "Clean as a Whistle", promises a grim aftermath to this situation.**



WITCHES TALES #1 (Jan 1951) **Harvey's first horror title begins its career with a ghoulish grave-digger, demons, and a woman in peril on the cover- a somewhat pedestrian yet honest packaging for these "eerie tales of supernatural horror!"**

ALL COVERS AND IMAGES © 1995 HARVEY PUBLICATIONS

27, February 1955
28, April 1955

SHOCKING TALES DIGEST
1, October 1981

THE SILVER SCREAM
1, June 1991
2, August 1991
3, November 1991

TOMB OF TERROR
(Thrills of Tomorrow #17-20)
1, June 1952
2, July 1952
3, August 1952
4, September 1952
5, October 1952
6, November 1952
7, January 1953
8, March 1953
9, May 1953
10, July 1953
11, September 1953
12, November 1953
13, January 1954
14, March 1954
15, May 1954
16, July 1954
17, October 1954
18, December 1954
19, February 1955
20, April 1955

WITCHES TALES
(Witches Western Tales #29-30, Western Tales #31-33)
1, January 1951
2, March 1951
3, May 1951
4, July 1951
5, September 1951
6, November 1951
7, January 1952
8, March 1952
9, April 1952
10, May 1952
11, June 1952
12, July 1952
13, August 1952
14, September 1952
15, October 1952
16, December 1952
17, February 1953
18, April 1953
19, June 1953
20, August 1953
21, October 1953
22, December 1953
23, February 1954
24, April 1954
25, June 1954
26, August 1954
27, October 1954
28, December 1954
29, February 1955
30, April 1955
31, October 1955
32, Jan-March 1956
33, July-August 1956

The Carl Barks Halloween story that almost wasn't!

Disney's Ousted Ogre

By Michael Naiman

Safe and cuddly, non-threatening and benign... these are the images that come to mind when you say that magic word... Disney. Thanks to the editors at Western Publishing, parents in the early 1950s could rest assured that after reading a *Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse* or *Comics and Stories* magazine, their children could go to sleep with smiles on their faces. But one Carl Barks creation just might have provided a scary nightmare for some impressionable young readers if not for the ever watchful eyes of editor Alice Cobb!

Making it's debut in the first numbered Donald Duck comic book after the *Four Color* series, "Trick or Treat" was published in *Donald Duck* #26 (November-December 1952) and was a heavily censored adaptation of the animated Disney cartoon of the same name. It was not until Bruce Hamilton issued the *Carl Barks Library* and reassembled the previously edited missing panels that readers could enjoy the unexpurgated version of the story. The editors at Western disliked Carl's story interpretation so much, (from a mood setting splash panel depicting a graveyard scene to the multi-armed ogre named Smorgie the Bad) that like Lizzy Borden allegedly gave to her parents, Western gave Carl's version of the story forty "editorial" whacks!

WHACK The Opening Panel!

Starting with page one's splash panel, Barks had hoped to cast a particular mood over the sequence of events to follow. The graveyard scene with its bloody title was apparently deemed too unsettling for kids. Instead, a tamer page-and-a-half of "set-up" for Witch Hazel's entrance is substituted. With this opening panel removed, the reverse angle "bookend" final panel in the story loses its "bracketing" effect.

WHACK Nine Pages!

The trick or treat tale continues to unfold with Donald, refusing to be extorted for treats on Halloween by his nephews, hiding the key to a locked closet filled with Halloween candy. Witch Hazel, who has witnessed Donald's stinginess, offers help to the nephews. Madcap ghosts and goblins conjured up by Witch Hazel cannot influence Donald into changing his miserly mind. As Donald says "It'll take more than a witch to get candy from Donald Duck." It is at this junction in the story that the editorial "magic shears" decide to clip and omit the next nine pages. According to Geoffrey Blum's article "Halloween in Duckburg", (appearing in the *Carl Barks Library* Vol. 2 Book 3) Barks was not even paid for the extra pages that were deleted! However, through Bruce Hamilton's diligent efforts, the missing pages have been reassembled to allow us to fully appreciate what Barks originally had in mind. The reassembled pages reveal a tantalizing terror soon to befall Donald.

Failing to obtain Donald's candy by disguising herself as a beautiful female duck, Witch Hazel decides to obtain it through force! From out of her magic bubbling cauldron arises Smorgasbord, Hazel's pet ogre. Smorgie knocks at Donald's door, and is temporarily rebuffed by an unbelieving Donald. Utilizing his unique ability to stretch his arms (a la Plastic Man or Mr. Fantastic) the creepy, hairy hands of Smorgie chase Donald throughout the house. The hands frighteningly appear through windows, from under the floor and out of the fireplace all the while grabbing at Donald in a desperate attempt to subdue him. Finally, Donald is caught around the neck by a choking hand and he reluctantly agrees to unlock the closet.

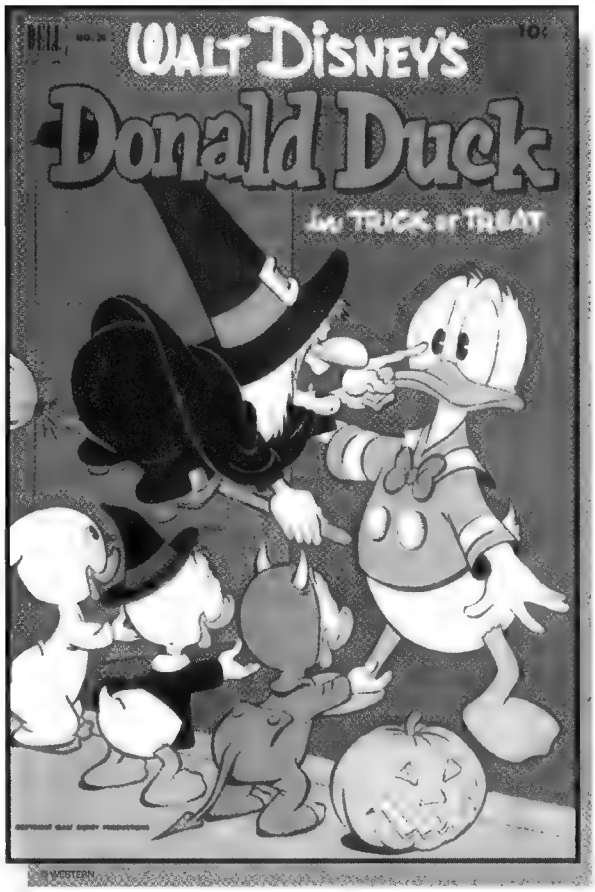
While inside he spies a box of dynamite and as a "special treat" for Smorgie, disguises a lethal stick of TNT with jam and offers the big stick of "candy" to the beast. Smorgie is then blown to smithereens after consuming Donald's "trick or treat" surprise. All that is left of the nightmare creature is his derby hat!

Frightening Gruesomeness

It's at this point that the edited story resumes with the original script and panels. The first panel on page 17 of the originally published story shows Hazel stomping upon the recently departed Smorgie's derby hat only giving us a vague hint at who (or what) might have previously worn it! The violence and frightening gruesomeness of the previous nine pages was considered by the editors to be inappropriate for a Disney comic book. Snip snip... and out it went! In fact, it wasn't until twenty-five years later that Smorgie was to reappear in a Barks oil painting entitled "Student Witch!"

You can now enjoy the reassembled and recolored (by Marie Severin, no less) version of this classic tale in the *Carl Barks Library* or in the recently released issue #21 of the *Carl Barks Library* of *Donald Duck Adventures in Color*.

While the editors at Western had the welfare of the impressionable children in mind, it is gratifying to be able to read the complete version as it was originally intended. Today, I'm not really sure which is more frightening...multi-handed ogres and ghouls or editors with blue pencils! ■



Huey, Dewey, Louie, and witch Hazel continue their campaign for Halloween goodies on Barks' magical cover of *Donald Duck* #26, the first numbered issue.

Smorgie finds himself in a "pot of trouble" in this classic Halloween saga. Smorgie the ogre did not appear again until the unveiling of the Bark's oil painting "Student Witch".

ALL CHARACTERS © 1995 WALT DISNEY

Michael Naiman has contributed numerous articles to CBM and participated in the comic book hobby as Price Guide Editor for Overstreet Publications, chaired the Grading Committee for Sotheby's Comic Book Auction and is currently Advertising Director for CBM. Collecting interests include Uncle Scrooge toys, original duck art and, of course, comic books.

Shocking! Incredible! Fantastic!

I was the Attorney for... The Comics Code Authority!

Brady Darvin interviews Code Administrator, Leonard Darvin

Interviewers note: Leonard Darvin, my Great Uncle, was born in Russia in 1909 and came to America in 1912. He graduated with a law degree from the University of Baltimore in 1933. Following his graduation, he joined the now defunct National Recovery Administration, where he was assigned to review codes in connection with dentistry. He moved to New York in 1942 to serve 12 years as Executive Secretary to the Dental Laboratory Association of the State of New York. He was retained by the Comics Magazine Association of America in 1955 and soon thereafter became Code Administrator, where he remained for almost 25 years. Presently, he lives in Queens, New York with his wife Dorothy, and was a guest of honor at the Comics Code Authority's banquet in December of 1994. He is still called upon by the Comics Code occasionally for consultation.

What was your position at the Comics Code Authority?

I was the Code Administrator, and any material that was slated for publication from any member publisher was submitted to our office. I had several assistants who would go over primary matters, and if they thought there was any question about something being in violation of the Code, I made a decision and contacted the editor— sometimes orally, sometimes in writing, sometimes with a meeting, and sometimes raising hell, and that's the way we did it.

So you were the Code Administrator... technically the head of the Comics Code Authority?

Well, there was nobody above me in the administrative sense, except for John L. Goldwater who was president of the Comics Magazine Association of America. "Code Administrator" is really just a phrase. In fact, anybody who's connected with it, either as an officer or as an employee, is technically helping to "administer" the Code. By the way, as far as I know the name of the organization has remained unchanged to this day and is still called the Comics Magazine Association of America, Incorporated.

What was a typical day like in the Code office?

In the area of public relations basically, people would write in and ask questions about the Comics Code. Some favored it... some were afraid of it.

As for approval, Publishers would send the original material on boards, about seventeen by twenty-two, roughly speaking, to the office. The Code office was on Forty-Second Street and Lexington Avenue.

We'd read them. I had to rely somewhat on my assistants, naturally, as I couldn't read them all, but if there were any questions at all about any material, it would be handed over to me, and if I okayed it we stamped it "approved" and sent it back by messenger. If not, we got into a "conference" with the editor or the publisher, sometimes acrimoniously, sometimes not. We made them change it.

My secretary and several reviewers (we had two or three) would also assist me in sending the pages back to the publishers. Most of the correspondence was delivered by messenger, because practically all of the publishers were located in New York.

Would all comic pages eventually fall across your desk for review?

Not entirely, no. If it were the usual comic, I would trust an assistant to read it. But if there were any questions about anything, I would read it thoroughly.

When you were editing these pages, would you simply mark things that had to be changed, or would you actually suggest how it had to be changed? Did you actually change copy?

We would write an opinion, so to speak. We'd go through the pages and say (for instance) "This is profane," and so on.

Did you suggest how to rewrite the sentence or the scene?

Well, we'd avoid that, but we'd tell them what we didn't want and let them choose how to fix it.

I think what you may be suggesting is that guys like me determined what was in the final copy read by the public! I'm sorry to disappoint you, but it really wasn't that way. I mean, we made suggestions that would be acceptable, but the publishers could choose to "fix things" in other ways... and some did.

After you returned the "problem pages" to the publisher, did you see the pages again after changes were made?

They would change them and send us the corrections.

And then you would approve (or not approve) the corrected version?

Yes. One of the things that I tried to do, aside from keeping the comics clean, was that I wouldn't want anybody to attack them either. Once I okayed the stuff, I would say to detractors of comic books "Look, you lay off!" Once a book was okayed, I'd defend it. If a religious or political group called and said, "Look, how could you okay this book? It's horrible! We want you to take back your approval." I would stand by the decision and the publisher at that point. I faced a few of those situations, but not too many, strangely enough.

Do you recall any specific comic books that you were really appalled by?

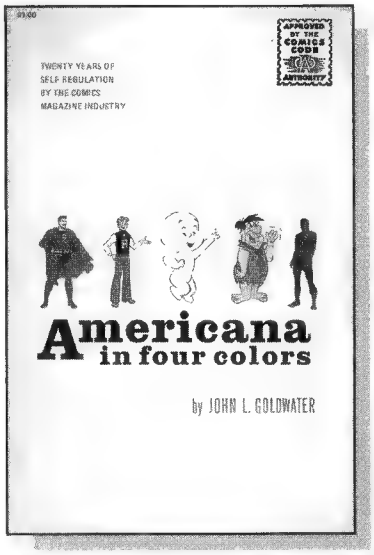
Well I can't give you the name of any specific book... and even if I did, it wouldn't be right for me to name them; I don't think it's fair.

I do recall that Stan Lee, the editor of Marvel, and Martin Goodman, the owner of Marvel, were two of my opponents. By no means was Stan interested in destroying the Code... in fact he was a strong supporter of the Code.

We just had differences. Nevertheless, Stan and Martin wanted to keep [their stories] "up with the times." But we always worked things out some way. I was just watching out for the best interests of the industry.

Besides Stan and Martin, what other notables in the industry did you work with while at the Comics Code?

At one time or another I worked with everybody in the business. I especially remember John Goldwater of Archie Comics. I'm still in touch with him occasionally. I also knew Bill Gaines at EC fairly well. When I came in, he was a member of the Comics Magazine Association of America and he hadn't published *MAD Magazine* yet... or maybe he was just about to start publishing it. He had published some interesting comic books, and I had a few tussles with him. But eventually (and not long after I came in) he concentrated on MAD Magazine, a humor *magazine* over which we had no authority... so we didn't have to review it at all.


APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
TWENTY YEARS OF SELF-REGULATION BY THE COMICS MAGAZINE INDUSTRY
Americana
in four colors
by JOHN L. GOLDWATER

What was Bill Gaines like?

Well, I thought that he was a very strange guy in some ways. He was kind of quiet, strangely enough, but he was very determined about what he wanted. He had a good sense of humor, obviously, although it wasn't visible sometimes (laughter). His people probably wrote the jokes for him, but I couldn't say that for sure. I don't really know. There may have been jokes he made, but he never said a hell of a lot. I was acquainted with Bill through our business contact, not actually in a personal way at all.

> I think what you may be suggesting is that guys like me determined what was in the final copy read by the public! I'm sorry to disappoint you, but it really wasn't that way.

Who were some of the people who were supportive of you and the Code?

Well, the most important person in the organization that helped me was John Goldwater of Archie. He was very staunchly in favor of the Code. First of all, the type of material he published was unquestionably okay. I mean we had very few occasions, if any that I can recall, where we had to reject any Archie stuff. This was unusual. Even Marvel and others had at least some material in it that we couldn't approve, even though it may not have been really bad.

There was also Jack Liebowitz. He was the top guy at National Comics (DC), which published Superman. He had a good mind... he knew what was good and what would sell. He brought Superman to the stands, and I credit the Superman character with starting the whole superhero comic business.

Do you think that the Code prevented Frederick Wertham from going too far?

Oh absolutely! If the Code had not existed, then the industry would have continued to "go too far", and then Dr. Wertham would have been able to really "do in" the industry. Not only was Wertham's Seduction book persuasive at the time, he had the prestige of being a psychiatrist, and he could have made it very difficult for any comics to sell at all. I mean comic books were (and still are) a publicity-driven kind of a thing. Comics either sell or they don't sell, based on what people *think* children ought to read. That's important in spite of the fact that the general public didn't know there were a lot of adults who read comics. Much of the stuff published today certainly is for adults.

Two facts are basic: Most people see comics as being only for youngsters... and kids will read comics with or without the approval of their parents.

The Code was kind of standing between the publishers and the parents. In other words, we didn't want to destroy comic books; we wanted to keep them around *and* keep them interesting to read. Wertham started a fire under the publishers when their comics sales were really picking up steam. I think he went too far though, because it seemed to me that he wanted to destroy the whole damn industry... and you know, the Code wouldn't let him.

As you look back on it, do you feel that the Comics Code actually helped the comic book industry?
Oh yes. Looking back to the days when the Code was first organized and established, I think the whole comic book industry would have been destroyed without it. The comic book publishing industry would not have survived.

What did you think of Dell not participating in the Code?
That of course, Brady old boy, is one of the little "holes in my armor". They were the only ones of any size or any consequence that refused to join. That decision pre-dated my arrival at the Code.

Did you ever try over the years to convince Dell to join?
I used every damn device you could name to convince Helen Meyer, the lady who was in charge of Dell. Dell was doing Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse and that sort of thing, and they felt they didn't need the Code. It wasn't personal, because I had many a pleasant conversation with the lady in charge of Dell.

Did Dell's refusal to participate hurt their sales or public image?
I'd like to say it did, but I don't think so.

Why was Dell so against participating in the Code?
I honestly don't know, and I'm reluctant to conjecture.

Did the average parent pay attention to the Code-Approved seal?
If the public saw a super hero without the Code's seal they figured, "Oh, the son of a bitch is out cutting people's throats!" If it had the seal, people knew that the violence was kept down. We did an honest job. Now, that doesn't mean that everything that passed through our office was 100% okay. It wasn't always... I didn't feel totally OK about some material... I sometimes had to compromise. But generally speaking, we did a good job, and they're still doing it.

Did you personally make any changes to the Code during the time you were there?
Yes. One of the big concerns that came up at that time had to do with drugs. The Code stated that you couldn't mention any kind of narcotics in the sequence of a story, and that you couldn't use material that showed somebody taking dope or anything like that. I was against that and I didn't think we ought to get into that area. I participated in correcting the Code to permit the portrayal of drug use within a certain limits.

Why did you feel that drug use should not be censored out?
During my tenure there (I was already forty-five years old when I started), the writers and the public became interested in different subjects... some of which were in the spotlight for a time, then they were passé after awhile. Writers had to replace them... you had to think "modern."

> If a religious or political group called and said, "Look, how could you okay this book? It's horrible! We want you to take back your approval." I would stand by the decision and the publisher at that point.

Guys (like Stan Lee) couldn't do the writing job they were supposed to do in an interesting way without mentioning this topic sometimes. We compromised with them.

I felt that we had to protect the industry, and that meant to protect it not only from a few doing substandard work, but also by meeting the demands of the reader, but within reason and within decency... so that the industry wouldn't be knocked out.

I also worked to make sure the various state legislatures who had bills banning comic books were kept informed. Few realize it, but we stopped those bans from becoming law by promising that we would watch the publishers.

Did you have any contact with parent, religious, or political anti comic book lobbies?
I spoke at parents' organizations... all kinds of organizations.

Did you ever get hate mail from any organizations... or any complimentary mail?
I don't recall getting any hate mail, in the extreme sense. I think some of the publishers might have gotten some based on a particular book or title... I actually got many kudos for the work I did all along.

What contact (if any) did you have with the members of the Senate Sub-Committee on Juvenile Delinquency?
I was a member of the trade association's executives. They

A RARE COPY OF THE 1974 EDITION OF AMERICANA IN FOUR COLORS... 20 years of self-regulation by the comics magazine industry... by John Goldwater. It contains a list of the basic comic book genres: Adventure, Animated-cartoon, Detective, Fantasy-Mystery, Humor, Religion, Romance, Science Fiction, Space, Sports, Teen Age, War, and Western.

had an office in Washington, and we occasionally had meetings there. I would go there and meet with the members of the House of Representatives and Senators... some of them knew me, and in most cases they complimented me on the work I was doing. I'm not kidding you. I mean it.

Those hearings actually began before you started working at the Code... I believe you weren't there until 1955.
That's right, but they continued... and I did testify before those hearings.

> If the Code had not existed, then the industry would have continued to "go too far", and then Dr. Wertham would have been able to really "do in" the industry.

What did you talk about at the hearings?
The same subjects that carried me through the entire twenty-five years... the decency of the material that must go into comics that are read by children. And the word "children" was then defined as anybody under twenty-one years of age. I point that out because that definition is stupid, but it's interesting... but that's the way they looked at it.

Did the Code rules vary from state to state?
No, it applied nationally. The Code was adopted by the entire industry, and the only time it changed was, as I said, when something came up that required that we allow certain material that previously had been denied.

Did you know there's now an organization called the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund? The fund's primary goal is to defend members of the comic book retail community or the creative community who are brought to court, or are under scrutiny for obscene material or material that the state they're publishing in may feel violates that state's laws. Do you think an organization like the CBLDF is in conflict with what the Comics Code does?
I hadn't heard of this organization... it's outside of the Code and defends the comic publishers from opposing positions? The Code should be doing that. I think that's where that responsibility belongs. If a group of comic book publishers think that they need an organization outside of the Code... then maybe the Code isn't doing the job right... it may mean that the Code is perhaps being too severe or not severe enough. If that's the case, I can understand the creation of a new group.

Given the new attitudes of the '90s, do you feel that the Code is still needed by the industry?
That's a good question. It may be that the Code needs further revision. As I pointed out previously, we have made revisions to it periodically right from the time it was first adopted. It may be that it's not in step with today's views on decency... and it could be that the present managers of the Code, who are not members of the industry, are not doing a good job of defending the rights of the publishers.

When did you visit the Code office last?
The last time I was at the Code office was to return some Wertham books I borrowed from their library a long time ago. I felt very bad about not returning them sooner (laughter). After all, I was there for twenty five years.

How "overdue" were those books?
They're pretty old but they're really not very significant, Even though they had a lot of significance publicity-wise, they really didn't say a hell of a lot. I am in touch with the present Code administration once in a while and they call me occasionally. In fact, they invited me to the last Comics Magazine Association of America banquet just as recently as last December.

One last question. Do you think the present day comic book industry is a good business to be in?
Well I think it could be a good business. It depends on what you do with it. Like anything else. But there's nothing wrong with the comic book business... if you can make money... ■

Editor's note: Brady Darvin is currently the Marketing Coordinator for Gemstone Publishing (Maryland office) and began working in the comic book industry as the Sales Administrator for Jim Shooter's Defiant in 1993.

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WAR HORRORS OF

It runs rampant in our everyday lives; Violence has manifested itself in movies, commercials, books, music, even conversation; it is unavoidable. So, violence is tolerated, and even sometimes relished. I'll admit to being a junkie to action movies and all of their glorified violence. In spite of its savagery, violence has proved to be intriguing, entertaining, and if channeled to one's liking, satisfying. Comic book publishers of the 1940's did just that... satisfactorily channeled violence.

BY MATT NELSON

When the superhero was invented, the concept behind it was an abnormally powerful man (or woman) who champions the cause of the innocent and the powerless. To achieve this, the element of violence was necessary in the catalyst of this superhero; it was to be channeled towards the malefactor, whoever that was. Mad Scientist, Nazi, alien, Commie, or just plain thug. By reading comic books, a child escaped into that four color world to become bullet proof, to turn invisible, to even fly. It felt good to pulverize the evildoer, and it was okay because good guys always won. It was...satisfaction.

And so, Superman punched Luthor. Cap slapped the Red Skull. Batman kicked the Joker. And the readers loved it; they wanted more. The publishers obliged. Some comics got increasingly violent; a few got brutal; and a couple got downright savage.

But, looking back over the covers of our Golden Age comics we don't see many truly gruesome covers. A few of us are jaded; after years of feverishly collecting ECs, Harveys and Gilmore horror comics, bullet wounds and attacking Japs don't exactly compare with rotting flesh and running sores. But look more closely! There are a handful of Golden Age covers out there that rival even the most gut wrenching horror comics of the 1950s!

These covers display as much blood, gore, and carnage as any one horror comic! Hard to believe? After countless covers of Superman playing pattycake with Lois Lane and the Shield baby-sitting Archie and his friends it's hard to imagine any 1940's comic cover having much horrifying substance. This was ironic, considering that our country was, at that time, embroiled in the most destructive war in the history of mankind. Stories from the warfront reeked of nightmarish scenes like extermination camps in Germany, and death marches in the Far East. They must have sparked some resentment in our artists then.

Slowly, comic covers began to pick up the pace. Artists developed a demented, almost humorous evolution of The Enemy; Japanese grew more yellow and developed fangs... Germans became grotesque monsters with unlimited torture devices. Americans despised the enemy, and comic book publishers echoed the public's emotions.

A few companies were not satisfied with just a swift chop to Hitler's jaw. They felt a more dramatic stance should be taken with these comic covers; fists were replaced by bullets, a chipped tooth by gushing blood and broken bone. Some covers began to push the limits of good taste... and push... and push...!

Eventually, the violence became broader; the enemy was not as discernible. Good guys were blown away as much as the bad guys. After WWII's end, war themes were replaced by crime, and action gave way to horror.

Same violence, different players.

But, no doubt about it, the WW II era definitely had its share of gruesome covers. Examples you say? Look no further, because the four brutal and bloody covers shown here are standout examples of violence and are among the goriest covers ever to ungracefully grace the covers of comic books from the period we have deemed the Golden Age. ■

COLOR GALLERY

HUMAN TORCH #12 (SUMMER 1943)

An intense example of the countless violent covers produced by Timely, the Golden Age publisher whose comics are presently in such high demand. This action scene is classic Schomburg, down to the platoon of soldiers, symbolic samurai sword, and beautiful damsel in distress in bondage. At the last second, the Human Torch and Toro swoop to the rescue. Torch quite effectively neutralizes the executioner by burning his arm to the bone! The cover portrayal of such a fantastically violent act is further embellished when the swordsman's right side erupts in boiling blood. Schomburg even included a small elbow joint for added realism. The effect of Torch's flame on human flesh was rarely depicted, especially on a cover.

RED DRAGON #7 (JULY 1943)

Street and Smith's *Red Dragon* used the magic of ancient Tibet to fight the modern menace of the wartime Japanese. A white ray from the hero's hand blasts the flesh from the torso of a Japanese officer on a cover that shows the ruthless anything-goes attitude that prevailed at the height of the conflict. This book was on the stands at the same time as *Human Torch* #12.

WAR HORRORS OF

©CONTINENTAL

TERRIFIC #4 (JULY 1944)
The Japanese pilot's expression of horror along with copious amounts of blood on the cover help to make this rare high grade copy an in-demand item by WWII comic book collectors. The realistically drawn battle scene with rolled back eyes and mouth agape add to the convincing depiction of war violence. One can almost see the blood trickle down his neck as he grabs his bullet-riddled face in desperation. Rudy Palais gets drawing credit for one of the most scarry covers of the Golden Age!

©FICTION HOUSE

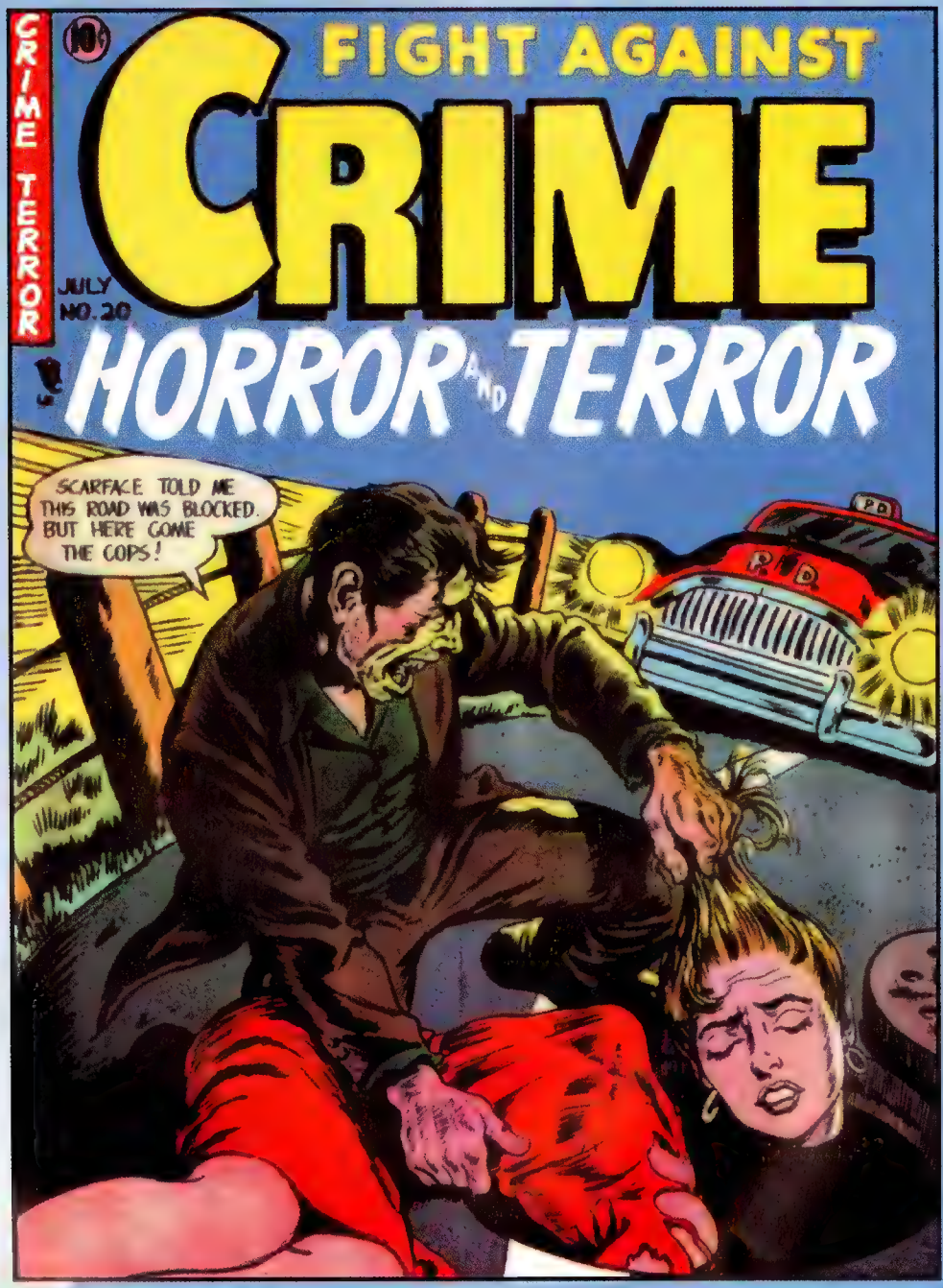
FIGHT #31 (APRIL 1944)
Most collectors consider this the "grand champion" of gory WWII Golden Age. This "masterpiece-of-the-macabre" features an American soldier cleanly decapitating one of the enemy while caught in an ambush in the jungles of the Far East. Note that the severed head is falling away from the body upside down as blood gushes from the stump like a waterfall. All this helps the comic reader to visualize action and provides a greater sense of the force of the blow. Long hidden from the public eye, this unbelievably graphic and gruesome entry from Fiction House continues to be among the highest demand Golden Age covers.

SKYROCKET #1 (1944)
The "bloody Japanese pilot" motif strikes again... some collectors feel even more effectively than the famous *Air Fighters* #2 cover. The scene is drawn in close-up, so that we actually see bullets exiting the pilots head and hand! This book has become quite collectible in recent months, despite inaccurate perspective and somewhat lackluster art. Instead of parachuting pilots in a defensive role (as is usually the case), the American pilot here is clearly portrayed in an offensive stance.

AIR FIGHTERS #2 (NOVEMBER 1942)
Hillman hired Charles Biro to make the second issue of *Air Fighters* a smash hit, and Biro delivered with this gory masterpiece of a cover and the origin of one of the great Golden Age characters. Here was a hero who, when at war, went for blood... as Birdie's machine guns exacted a grim vengeance for the Americans killed at Pearl Harbor. Airboy proved durable enough to last until 1953, when Hillman stopped publishing comics.

WAR HORRORS

PAT CALHOUN'S GRUESOME GALLERY OF PRE-CODE HORROR



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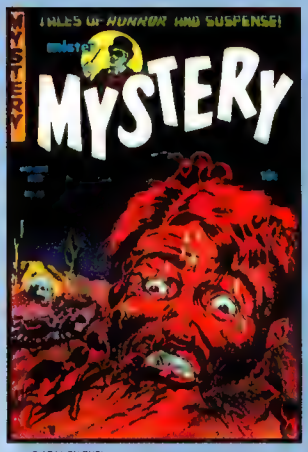

© ARAGON PUBL

FIGHT AGAINST CRIME #20 (JUL 1954)
With a little restraint the publishers could have milked the lucrative horror market for a couple of more glorious years; but...

CRIME SUSPENSTORIES #22 (MAY 1954)
This way-over-the-top Johnny Craig cover is the one that the Senate investigation into comic books queried Bill Gaines about.

© STAR PUBL

© LEV GLEASON

MISTER MYSTERY #11 (MAY/JUN 1953)
Bernard Baily's ant feast (the skull in the background is a telling detail) is the first half of Mister Mystery's dubious honor of a Gruesome Gallery doubleheader.

STARTLING TERROR TALES #10 (MAY 1952)
This brutal assault is L. B. Cole's intro piece for the marvelous Wally Wood/Harry Harrison adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

CRIME DOES NOT PAY #24 (NOV 1942)
This was only the third issue as a crime comic-and although this came out long before the 1950s-it shows that Gleason had already gotten about as gruesome as possible.

© ATLAS

© CHARLTON COMICS GROUP

SPELLBOUND #17 (SEP 1953)
The cover isn't overtly gross, but it is superbly disquieting concept-elegantly executed by Bill Everett.

LAWBREAKERS SUSPENSE STORIES #11 (MAR 1953)
This is a candidate for the grossest cover dialogue ever...yow!

PAT CALHOUN'S GRUESOME GALLERY OF PRE-CODE HORROR

PUNCH COMICS #9 (JUL 1944)
Coming just before pre-Code crime and horror, this pioneering cover is also a profound psychological statement about art.

WITCHES TALES #25 (JUN 1954)
The artist wisely left the sound effects up to our imaginations.

WEIRD MYSTERIES #5 (JUN 1953)
There's something about a brain "naked and unadorned" that does make one cringe. This issue contains the Basil Wolverton masterpiece "Swamp Monster".

MISTER MYSTERY #12 (JUL/AUG 1953)
This is a painful to behold yet perfect example of the "injury to the eye" motif.

TRUE CRIME #4 (MAY 1948)
The ultimate 'swiss cheese" cover-from the beginning of the pre-Code era.

VAULT OF HORROR #30 (APR/MAY 1953)
There's something almost humorous about this grisly cover concept... including the additional touch of EC satire suggested by the "subtle" stomach upset? sign in the background.

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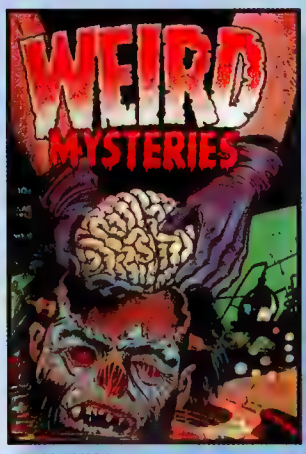

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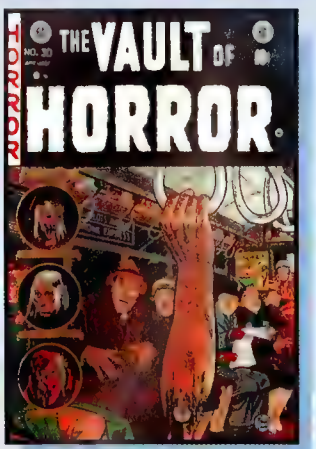

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There's two sides to every story...

In defense of Dr. Wertham

America's foremost adversary of comic books just may have been right after all...

APRIL 23ND, 1954 DAWNED BRIGHT OVER THE steel gray skyscrapers soaring upward over the bustling, busy metropolis that was New York City. Spring was very definitely in the air for most people rejoicing the blooms in Central Park; for some though, April 23rd was not a day of rejoicing. America's comic book industry was on trial; this sunny morn in New York's U.S. courthouse a verdict of sorts would be handed down, a verdict that would reverberate across a land given to excesses, never compromise.

BONDAGE and the female form dominate the cover of *Jungle Comics* #85.

Senators Estes Kefauver, Thomas Hennings, Jr., William Langer, Richard Clendenen, and Robert C. Hendrickson, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency, deliberated their findings following two days of testimony from those for and against the bête noire of the publishing industry. Comic book companies quaked in their shoes fearing the worst after scathing indictments laid at their doors by the industry's nemesis, the much respected Dr. Fredric Wertham.

Wertham's testimony, along with lurid descriptions of the contents of some comic books, was enough to convince the Subcommittee that something needed to be done if the excessive violence and sexual depravity found in some comics was to be curtailed. While the senators might have considered legislation against offensive comics necessary, their hands were tied by the Constitution's loosely framed "free speech" amendment, and the desire not to appear eager to censor. After much soul searching, a special session of the Subcommittee convened on June 4th.

That hearing sounded the death knell for many comics publishers and grievously wounded the rest. Senator Hendrickson made no bones about the committee recommending legislation to crush the industry if it didn't voluntarily clean up its act. Hendrickson said: "I think I speak for the entire committee when I say that any action on the part of the distributors, wholesalers, or dealers with reference to these materials which will tend to eliminate them from production and sale, shall receive the acclaim of myself and my colleagues. A competent job of self-policing will achieve much."

To stay alive, the surviving comic book publishers swallowed their alka-seltzers and rushed to put together a workable comics code which would eradicate all that the Judiciary Subcommittee found objectionable. The industry went from the sublime to the ridiculous, their fear of government retaliation forcing a prolonged period of sanitized white-washing which left comics squeaky clean, and in the view of some... utterly boring!

Although it was a victory of sorts, comics' main protagonist, Dr. Wertham, was not entirely happy. He didn't want out-and-out censorship, governmental or self-inflicted. He wanted laws banning the sale of questionable comics to children, not total prohibition. Nobody appeared to understand; he was reviled by the industry for what he had done, and for his best-seller, *Seduction of the Innocent*, which told tales EC, Fox, and Lev Gleason didn't want to hear... nor any other publisher for that matter.

The public, along with several radio talk shows, often find it easy to be suspicious of, or even to hate anyone not of the mainstream...slightly avant garde...and/or

Setting the record straight after nearly half a century!

by Nicky Wright

intelligent. For nearly half a century, Wertham has been vilified by comic book collectors, by the comics industry, and comic media in general... most of whom may not even know the full story. Such is the virulence that surrounded Wertham, a virulence that suggests ignorance rather than constructive criticism, and it haunted him to his grave and beyond.

While I don't necessarily agree with everything Dr. Wertham said or did about comics, I have to admit that his campaign was a conscientious attempt to curb an industry running out of control with no idea when or how to stop its ever increasing excesses. When Wertham began his campaign in 1948 a peculiarly American art form was heading for the gutter. Sexual sleaze was the order of the day in Fox Features comics like *Rulah, Zoot*, and *Phantom Lady*. Lev Gleason's two editors, Charles Biro, and soon-to-be wife murderer Bob Wood, heaped nastiness upon nastiness in *Crime Does Not Pay,* and *Crime & Punishment*.

Such are the misconceptions about Wertham, that it is time to redress the imbalance of negative editorials and propaganda. Many follow the mistaken belief that Wertham was a supreme egotist, only interested in self-gratification, that he glorified in his magazine, radio, and TV interviews, that he loved the notoriety and fame his stand against comics generated. This is patently not true.

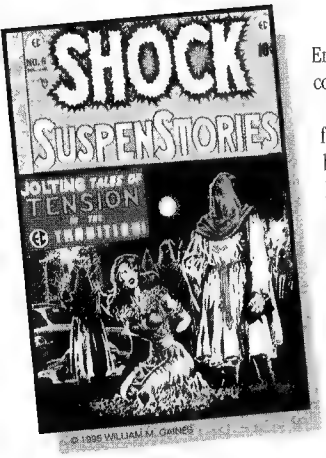
Who was Frederic Wertham?

Dr. Fredric Wertham was an intellectual, a quiet, modest man who preferred his life on his farm near Kempton, Pennsylvania in the company of his beloved wife, Hesketh. Together they would take trips into the countryside in their two seater MG TC sports car to enjoy each other's company. They were very close; like swans they were inseparable.

It should be noted that comic books and their influence were furthest from Wertham's mind when he took up a career as a psychiatrist. He was born in Nuremberg, Germany on March 20th, 1895, one of five children of Mathilde and Sigmund Wertheimer. Wertham's parents were non-practicing middle-class Jews who abandoned their religion to become gentiles. His father was a successful businessman who was active in local politics and supported the rather stiff, authoritarian German culture of the day.

Before emigrating to America in the 1920s, Fredric Wertham spent much time in England, a country he favored due to its more liberal environment. He was studying medicine at King's College, London University, when a radical young Bosnian Serb assassinated Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and his wife while on a visit to Sarajevo. The assassination ignited a powder keg under European nations eager to fight with each other. On August 1, 1914, Germany declared war on Russia; Russia invaded Germany; Germany advanced into France, Luxembourg, then Belgium. On August 4, Britain entered the conflict and World War I was under way. Because he was a German national, Wertham was interred by the

A PEASANT IS ABOUT TO BE "BEHANDED" from the cover of *Tales From The Crypt* #31. Art by Jack Davis.



HOODED VILLAINS kidnap yet another "helpless female" on the cover of *Shock SuspenStories* #6.

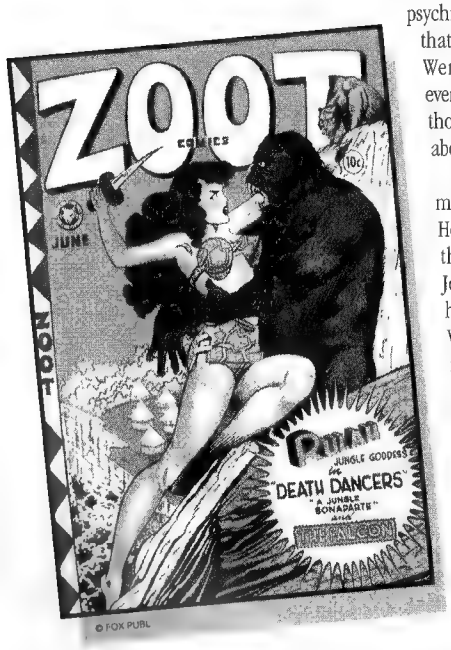
English for a short period, then freed and allowed to continue his studies.

While living in England, Fredric became a great fan of Charles Dickens and his works. Dickens' books impressed him, especially the influence they had on society, and the social reforms that occurred because of them. Like many young intellectuals of the day, Fredric studied the writings of many authors, including such liberals as Karl Marx and Fabian socialism.

After the war, Wertham returned to Germany and continued to study, eventually obtaining his M.D. degree from the Wurzburg University in 1921. He studied further in Paris and Vienna before joining the Kraepelin Clinic in Munich. Emile Kraepelin had developed a technique based on family background, environment, and the social-political community. All this, Kraepelin believed, needed to be known before treating psychiatric patients. The concepts that Wertham learned at the clinic had significant influence on his later work.

Before leaving for America in 1922 to take up a position with Adolf Meyer (who followed the Kraepelin school of thought), Walter Lippmann asked Wertham to visit Sigmund Freud and request an article for the *Saturday Review*. It was obvious Freud had no time for the *Saturday Review* or America, saying that nobody cared for psychoanalysis in America and one shouldn't write about psychiatry for the popular press. From that moment on it would seem that Wertham disagreed with almost everything Freud believed in, be it his thoughts on psychiatry or his views about the popular press.

IMPENDING BESTIALITY on the cover of *Zoot* #15 shocked newsstand goers.



Meyer had introduced Kraepelin's methods initially at Worcester State Hospital in Massachusetts, later at the Phipps Psychiatric Clinic at Johns Hopkins University. It was here, working with Meyer, that Wertham honed his skills. He remained at the Clinic for seven years, beginning his career as a professor of psychiatry. Perhaps of telling significance was his work with Clarence Darrow (the great lawyer). Wertham worked with him and became one of the first psychiatrists willing to testify on behalf of African-American defendants.

It was while he was at Johns Hopkins that Fredric met and married Florence Hesketh. Born in Maine and educated at Wellesley, Hesketh was an artist doing biological research at the hospital, as a Charleton Fellow in Medicine. It may sound trite, but Hesketh and Wertham were made for each other. Although they never had children, a couple could not have been so close as they were. They co-authored an important book, *The Brain as an Organ: Its Postmortem Study and Interpretation* (1934), in which Hesketh did all the cell plate illustrations.

The Brain as an Organ was so well received that it became a standard medical text. Because of their work, Wertham received the first psychiatric grant ever awarded by the National Research Council. Prior to the book, nobody ever thought of the brain as an organ, and it was Wertham who was responsible for what has become accepted as a psychiatric norm.

Other important breakthroughs and research Wertham carried out at Johns Hopkins included the first study on the effects of mescaline, insulin use in psychotherapy, and the mosaic test in which patients assemble pieces of colored wood into shapes, thus enabling the psychiatrist to better evaluate patients.

By this time Fredric Wertham had become an American citizen and officially changed his name to "Wertham"; (lest we forget he had been born Wertheimer). While busy with his research, an event occurred that had no bearing on his work at the time. In early 1934, as Adolf Hitler was stoking the fires of hate in Germany, a small, brightly colored magazine appeared on the newsstands of America. It was called *Famous Funnies* and reprinted Sunday newspaper comic strips. It sold for 10¢, and its 35,000 run sold out. Although *Famous Funnies* was the world's first true comic book, its founder had been involved with a couple of experimental "giveaway" comic books in 1933. It is more than coincidental that Maxwell Gaines' son would cross Wertham's path several times within two decades.

As Wertham went from strength to strength, so did the fragile comic book industry. Two years before *Famous Funnies* appeared, Wertham had been named senior psychiatrist at the famous Bellevue hospital by the New York Department of Hospitals. He founded and directed America's first psychiatric screening clinic to check every convicted criminal for the Court of General Sessions (now the New York State Supreme Court). In 1936 he was director of Bellevue's Mental Hygiene Clinic; the same year Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson turned his two tabloid sized, mostly black and white comics first issued in 1935, into standard comic books with original stories and art.

Dark Legend

It wasn't long before Wertham's fame as a psychiatrist became known to the public at large. As the thirties wore on, Wertham was involved with several interesting murder

cases as a forensic psychiatrist. These cases led to a pair of books now regarded as classics of their type. The first was *Dark Legend: A Study in Murder*, published in 1941, and is the grim story of a 17 year old who brutally murders his promiscuous mother. Wertham was called in to diagnose the youth. As a result of his diagnosis, in which Wertham said the lad suffered from a circumscribed mental disorder, "which rendered him defenseless and resourceless at the time of the deed". Wertham's findings led to the youth being committed to a psychiatric institution. Nine years later he was discharged, completely cured. He later married and led a happy, fruitful existence.

After *Dark Legend*, Wertham began to take a more than passing interest in violence and its causes. He was asked to analyze several prominent murderers, such as child-killer Albert Fisk, professional gunman Martin Lavin, and Robert Irvin, known as "The Mad Sculptor". In *Show of Violence* published in 1948, Wertham discusses each case, probing into every part of the individual's life before he/she went off the rails. His research drove Wertham to declare that "the violence that manifests itself in violent crimes is not the expression of an inborn instinct of aggression and destruction. People like to be non-violent." He continued by saying it is negative factors in personality development; that the social medium helps encourage acts of violence. "The murderer", Wertham writes, "can never kill without a transformation of values which may come from his innermost mind but is always derived ultimately from social pre-judgments and prejudices."

When *Show of Violence* came out, the by now very large comic book industry had become a medium in which violence was a sales factor. During the war much of the violence was termed "patriotic" especially when the violence showed a Japanese soldier being decapitated (*Military Comics*), an *Airfighters* cover with a close-up of a pained Japanese pilot with blood pouring from his mouth, and Germans suffering well earned retribution from the enthusiastic might of Captain America. After the war there were no Germans and Japanese to fight, so most super heroes died away to be replaced by crime and very risqué "good girl" art comics (Well, risqué as far as children were concerned). Dr. Fredric Wertham and the comics industry were now racing towards each other... from opposite directions of the same track... on a collision course!

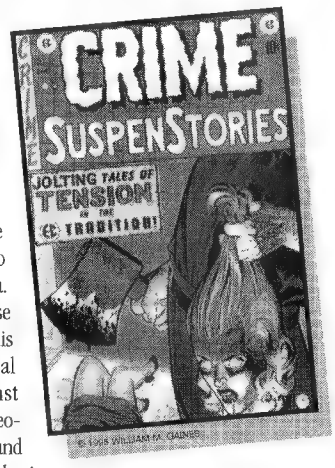
Dr. Quarter

In 1946 Wertham founded the now legendary Lafargue Clinic in Harlem to give extended psychiatric care to troubled youth. With very little money, he tried to obtain government funds to open the clinic for almost ten years without success. He was encouraged to go ahead without official help, by such stalwarts as Ralph Ellison, Paul Robeson, and Richard Wright. A church basement became the clinic; the volunteer staff was multi-racial, and mindful of the financial condition of the poor. Patients were only charged a quarter a visit. Soon the Lafargue Clinic... it was named after Dr. Paul Lafargue, who happened to be Karl Marx's son-in-law... found fame as the first clinic to serve poor Americans, black or white, and for promoting civil rights.

INTER-RACIAL VIOLENCE towards women was a common theme in this genre.

Harlem's black community respected "Dr. Quarter" as Wertham became known, and many worried parents brought their delinquent, emotionally disturbed youngsters to see him. Remember that many of them came from poor homes, single parent families, and grew up in an environment not conducive to a mentally healthy lifestyle.

Although he was involved with important discrimination and segregation issues, especially in Delaware where his arguments helped further the cause of desegregation. Wertham did not neglect his Lafargue Clinic. His research done with his mostly poor, black charges who had run afoul of the law suggested they had done so because of the environment of repression and violence to which they were subjected. In his talks with the youngsters, many of whom were illiterate, he found they shared a common denominator. The comic book.



SEVERED HEAD and bloody ax make for a gruesome cover.

Unlike Freud

Before going any further, let us remember that Wertham, was not a conservative as most in fandom have been led to believe by most previously published articles. On the contrary he was first and foremost a liberal who went out of his way to help the needy and the repressed. He was involved with the notorious Rosenberg case, the couple who allegedly sold atomic bomb secrets to Russia. At the time, helping the Rosenberg defense team was a very dangerous thing to do. This was the same era that saw America's radical right waging a vicious campaign against imagined communists at the behest of "neo-fascist" Senator Joe McCarthy. Amidst it all (and unlike Freud who believed violence was a basic

CLASSICS Illustrated
THE DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS, PIP VISITED HIS PARENTS' GRAVE
ALSO GEORGIANA WAS OF GOOD HEART
A NOISE WARNED PIP OF HIS DANGER...
Oi! Don't cut my throat, sir. May don't as it, sir!
Tell us your name!
Pip sir!
You young dog, what a fat cheek you've got! I've half a mind to eat 'em!
Please! You wouldn't do that, sir!
© GILBERTON

VIOLENCE TO CHILDREN is the theme on this Classics Illustrated page

A ROTTING CORPSE returns from the dead in this closeup of *Tales From The Crypt* #24

instinct of man) Wertham considered violence something we learn from what we experience or what we see.

"The power," Wertham once wrote, "of human violence is very great, not only on the direct victims but in its influence on the orientation of a whole society as well. That is why the control of violence-producing factors occupies such a key position in the power structure of any society." The comic book industry laid itself wide open.....

From Misgivings To Outcry

What of the comics? What did they portray? Were they that bad? They had started out so well. Vibrant, imaginative picture books costing a mere ten cents, and filled with adventure and derring-do. *Superman, Batman, Captain Marvel, Walt Disney's Comics and Stories, Popular Comics, Marvel Mystery*, and so on. Well drawn covers with truly expressive art invited youngsters into 64 pages of wholesome adventure and fun. Innocent fare unlikely to thwart children's mental outlook. When war came, and thousands upon thousands of GIs went overseas, the comics went with them. And they became more violent. Now the industry had a young adult readership to cater to, and cater they did. *Jungle Comics, Jumbo Comics, Crime Does Not Pay*. Bosomy girls and realistic killers. Several super-heroes like Captain America went gung-ho for violence; the third issue of a comic called *Suspense* depicted Nazis in Ku Klux Klan outfits about to ram a sword though a scantily clad girl tied to a stake. A touch of the old Marquis De Sade? Super stuff for the kiddies!!

Although a few of the comics published during the war years invited misgivings from some quarters, it wasn't until 1947 that the misgivings became an outcry. Not that the industry worried too much; 1948's output was a nightmare of crime and "sleazy" girlie comics, the latter courtesy of Victor Fox. Bondage, illustrations that looked suspiciously like sado-masochism, men knocking women around, violence on every four-colored page, the material was asking for trouble in an increasingly hysterical, witch-hunting society. It should be noted however, that the above type of comics represented a minority of the numerous titles available on the newsstands.

"Sometimes I read a comic book ten times a day. I look at the pictures a long time. I just imagine as if they are real. They go around stabbing people..." The words from one of Wertham's troubled patients at the Lafargue Clinic. By now Wertham was beginning to see... or thinking he could see... a connection between the violence perpetrated by his patients and their comic book reading matter. The more he delved into the comics, the more he saw the results of his charges' problems. As the kids warmed to him, trusted him, they would bring their comics to "Dr. Quarter".

That Wertham was disturbed by their content goes without saying. He was mortified. He couldn't believe the stuff was freely available to any child willing to part with a dime. Many of his patients read twenty or more comics a week, and the ones who couldn't, looked at the pictures.

Wertham's Nemesis... Crime Comics

Crime comics were Wertham's nemesis. He loathed them, particularly Lev Gleason's *Crime Does Not Pay* book. Edited by Charles Biro and Bob Wood, *Crime Does Not Pay* became a top seller among the young, and slightly older alike. "More Than 6,000,000 Readers Monthly", boasted the comic on its cover, and "Dedicated to the Eradication of Crime", was another message.

The art was quite good in these comics with renderings from the likes of Bob Fujitani, Dan Barry, George Tuska, and Fred Guardineer appearing regularly. They illustrated the somewhat cynical stories pumped out by Charles Biro. Judging by the huge talk balloons and captions, nobody could accuse *Crime* for not having a sort of literary content.

There were other comics Wertham dug out of the pockets of his delinquent patients, like Jack Cole's infamous *True Crime*. Talk about murder, mayhem, abused women, and drugs. Oh, and *Crimes By Women* and *Phantom Lady*... she's the one the kids referred to as having "headlights". All pretty lurid, all over-stepping the boundaries of good taste. Perhaps these titles, and others like them, were meant for an older audience, but they were mixed in with *Looney Tunes* and *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* on the dealers' shelves. And kids being kids would naturally buy them.

Over seven years were spent by Lafargue Clinic workers and Dr. Wertham on whether comic books had any bearing on children with emotional or criminal problems. Subject

after subject was studied; in each case the child was an avid comic book reader. Not *The Funnies*; not *Captain Marvel*, oh, no. they read crime comics, jungle comics, and mystery comics. That was the stuff they brought to Wertham. And he and his team saw a link in the environmental chain that deviated the children from the straight and narrow. Comics clearly had a strong influence on immature minds.

The Attack Begins

In his first article on comics, published in the May 29th, 1948 issue of *The Saturday Review of Literature*, Wertham went on the attack with enthusiastic gusto. He said this toward the end of the piece: "My own clinical studies and those of my associates at the Lafargue Clinic have convinced me that comic books represent systematic poisoning of the well of childhood spontaneity..." He blamed comic books for the increase in violent juvenile delinquency. He used extreme examples of childhood violence against other children: A four year old girl is tied up, beaten with toy guns, used for bow and arrow practice, and is tortured, would you believe, by boys between the ages of three and nine years old!

It goes without saying that the article echoed what a lot of parents already knew about many of the comics they found under their children's beds. Dr. Wertham became their spokesman, though, as far as he was concerned, quite unintentionally. Over the next six years Wertham spent much time devoting himself to what appeared to be the evils of comic books and their corruption of America's youth.

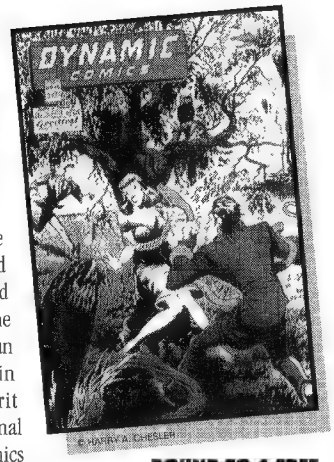
Mindful of the growing campaign against their wares, comic book publishers banded together and created The Association of Comic Magazine Publishers. Members of ACMP would adhere to a set of guidelines that purported to clean up comics. Any comic with a star and bar on its cover would be wholesome, was the claim. In fact, comics with the "Authorized ACMP" star and bar on the cover were actually the worst, and Wertham lost no time in pointing this out. Comics first attempt at image building (however immature) was defunct.

The Hysterical Fifties

As the forties rolled into the fifties, Wertham's attacks on the comics increased in intensity. Not that it made any difference. Aiming at the lowest common denominator, the comics got... *worse*... instead of better. Violence and gore, mixed with a Freudian sampling of bosoms and buttocks in provocative positions combined with heaping helpings of bondage, *increased* with each succeeding month. William Gaines got into the act with a series of superbly drawn, well written horror and crime comics that were not only violent, but described by many of the day as "very sick" as well. EC's success with *Tales From the Crypt* and *Crime Suspense Stories* began a chain reaction. Soon normally "wholesome" publishers such as Harvey and Fawcett got into the act. Captain Marvel had to live with *Down With Crime* and *Tales of Terror*, while Joe Palooka shared the ring with *Tomb of Terror* and *Chamber of Chills*.

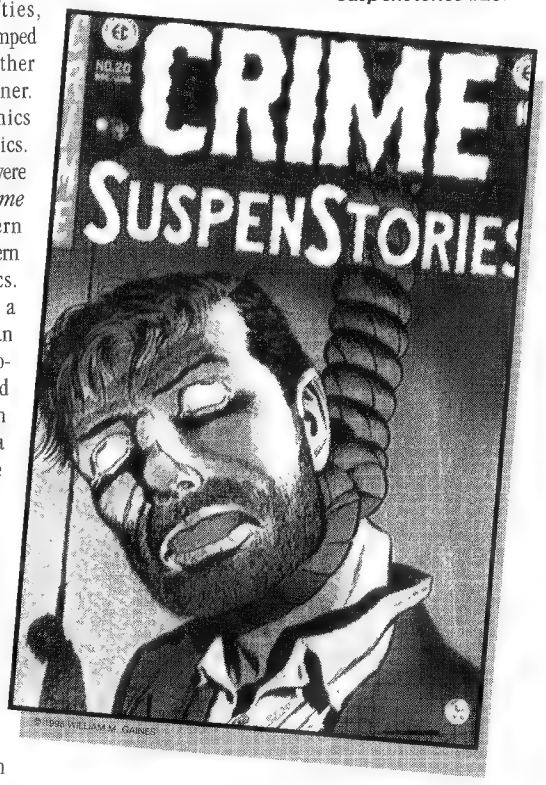
Apart from the EC titles, which were undeniably good even if some questioned their "lack of taste", most of the horror and crime comics that poured out during the early fifties were pretty awful. By that I mean badly drawn and badly scripted. Main characters of mean and sadistic spirit became the order of the day, though National Comics Publications (DC) and Dell Comics stuck to their tried and true formulas of "good, clean fun and adventure." Timely, which became Marvel, then Atlas, pumped out more titles than anyone, many of which being quite well drawn and written. Atlas had Bill Everett, Joe Maneely, Russ Heath, and Gene Colan to count on, but the comics were mostly crime, horror, and extremely violent westerns.

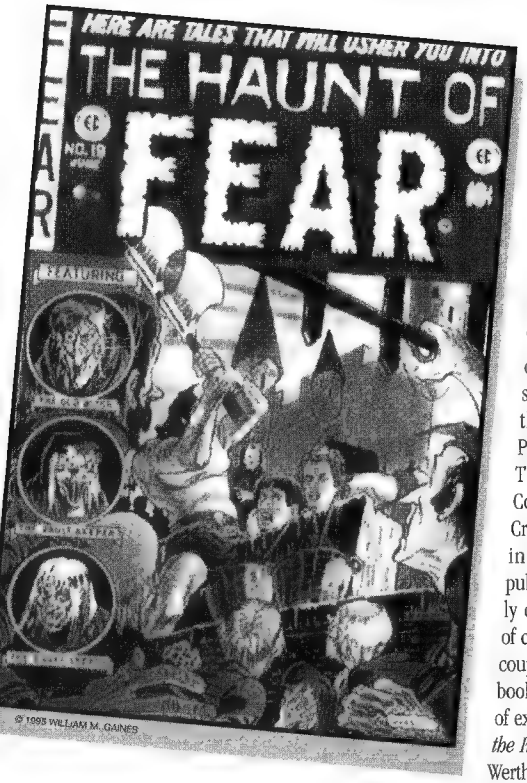
By the early and very hysterical fifties, Wertham had lumped all comics together under one banner. Crime. All comics were crime comics. Funny animals were funny animal *crime* comics, Western comics were Western *crime* comics. Superman was a fascist, Batman and Robin, homosexuals, and Wonder Woman most definitely a lesbian. These conclusions based on circumstance; Batman and Robin lived together, and the might of Superman could be translated into Hitler's dream of a perfect Aryan being.



BOUND TO A TREE
a kidnapped woman faces torture and a poisnous snake

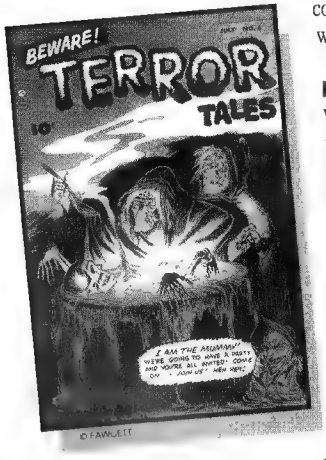
HUNG BY THE NECK UNTIL DEAD
on the cover of *Crime SuspenStories* #20.





DOUBLE BEHEADING on the cover of *Haunt of Fear* #19

A BOILING BODY graces the cover of *Beware! Terror Tales* #8



By 1954 the comics publishers had their backs to the wall. City after major city enacted legislation to ban horror, crime, and jungle comics from their newsstands. There were weekly comic burnings in small towns (just like the book burning in Pre WWII Germany). The Senate Sub-Committee on Juvenile Crime was now involved in a full scale, well publicized, and politically charged investigation of comics. Then came the coup de' é-tat. With comic books poised at the brink of extinction, *Seduction of the Innocent* by Dr. Fredric Wertham hit the book stores like an A-Bomb!

An immediate best-seller, *Seduction* literally blew the lid off the comics industry. There was even a 16-page picture section showing examples of what Wertham perceived to be some of the worst comics. It started with the now famous baseball game frame from *Haunt of Fear* #19, and ended with the cover for Avon's *Reform School Girl*! Shortly after the book was published, Kefauver's Senate Sub-Committee found comic book publishers wanting. They were warned to either clean up...or be cleaned up!

It's Official

Which is, as most collectors know, exactly what happened. Fearful of threatened legislation, the industry formed an "official" comics authority to police every comic before publication. All comics would have to carry a large stamp in the top right-hand corner of the cover which would read "Approved by the Comics Code Authority". Only Dell and Gilberton (publisher of *Classics Illustrated*), declined to join. Considering what they published it was understandable that there was no need for them to be reviewed for content, they also didn't want to be associated in any way with comics that did need scrutiny.

So the code was enacted, the first issues carrying the stamp appearing in April, 1955. America at last appeared to be settling down after half-a-dozen years of pure hysteria.

Commentary On Violence

Most of Wertham's cases came from disrupted or poor families, few from the other side of the tracks. In a way these deprived, ill educated youngsters proved Wertham's point: that violence is a direct result of the environment in which we may live. He disagreed with the Freudian credo that violence is a basic part of man's psyche. And well may he be right. There are South American Indian tribes who are never violent and have always lived in peace and harmony with one another. On the other hand those who live in the so-called "civilized world" are bombarded daily with violence (in one form or another) every day! It's either movies (e.g. "Natural Born Killers", etc.) Nintendo games, TV shows, even the sport of football... the procession of cultural violence goes on and on.

Consider today's comic books... many are far more violent than those published in Wertham's day. Hand in hand with this trend is a murder and mayhem rate that is among the highest in any civilized society. It's easy to see how some can (and did) make the "leap of logic" and arrived at the conclusion that there is a correlation between violent literature/media and violence! Any reasonable person could come to a similar conclusion.

In many ways the "infamous" Dr. Wertham was right. He saw the tentacles of barbarism slithering out of the pages of many 10¢ comic books. Women in most cases were treated like objects "deserving" of violent treatment. Look at some of the covers of *Jungle Comics*. and one sees the "visual lesson" on many cover... the lesson that bondage is the women's lot. Whippings, torture, humiliation, and general cruelty greet innocent readers of the colorful pages inside.

Zoot #15

Victor Fox was the best exploiter of sexual innuendo. Take *Zoot Comics* for example. In issue #15, a woman cavorts in a bead strung bikini while throwing spears into hapless natives bound to stakes. Blood gushes and the dancing woman screeches: "Let there be blood! Blood to moisten the ground for dancing feet!" whew...

Panels later, Rulah is bound to the stake and a fire lit under her. She escapes, naturally, with nary a singe on her pale, white skin. Her pet panther rips the throat out of the dancing woman; blood is shown gushing once more.

In the next tale the opening panel shows a wonderful piece of sado-masochism. Hands tied behind her, a girl kneels on the ground, her head covered in a hood. Her head is on a chopping block. Above her, an executioner, ax

raised, awaits the command of a man obviously deriving immense pleasure, to cut her head off. This is shown later in the story with blood pouring down the block. Another, nearly naked girl, is tied to a stake and shot. Rulah has a writhing, provocatively posed battle with a python...snakes are great Freudian fare..., and she is shown in very sexual poses in a number of panels.

After the first two stories the final one is quite tame. It only has men strung up by their wrists by another bikini clad woman. Oh, and Rulah has a tussle with a gorilla who obviously fancies her for himself. Good, clean hints at bestiality to end the comic.

This particular issue of *Zoot* might be an extreme example, but any collector who was willing to be honest about it would have to concede that this material is not appropriate for younger readers. Victor's company even managed to combine sex and crime in a pair of comics called *Crimes By Women* and *Women Outlaws*. Apart from some racy covers, not even Fiction House could match Fox Features for sleaze.

Entertaining Comics

I mentioned Entertaining Comics, William Gaines' little company, a bit earlier. EC Comics employed some of the finest artists in the field. The comics were aimed at an older audience, that was obvious. Captions and speech balloons filled every available space thus making each seven page story a mini-novelette. Trouble was, in their enthusiasm, the writers and artists quite often overstepped the good taste line, at least from a child's point of view.

Many EC stories were social documentaries and were exceedingly unpopular in certain quarters. *Shock SuspenStories* would carry tales about race hatred, phony patriotism, the evils of right wing bully boys, while *Frontline Combat* and *Two-Fisted Tales* (maybe the best war comics ever produced) didn't go in for gung-ho Sgt. Rock heroics. In fact, they were patently anti-war and painted a realistic picture of the futility of conflict. But no parent I have ever known would seriously consider these admitted classics as fit reading for elementary grade schoolers or younger. And that was exactly the problem... a comic was just a comic to store owners who didn't have the time nor the inclination to monitor what children were buying. A few probably didn't care as long as they dropped their dimes on the counter.

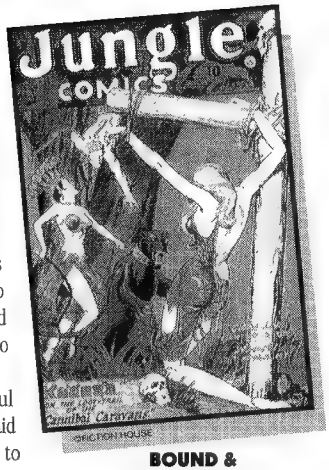
Artists & Writers

We must not forget the artists and writers responsible for the comics' content. Most were very young, enthusiastic, immature, and perhaps not always aware of what they were doing. Some were just 18, most under 30. Unlike artists such as C.C. Beck or Carl Barks, many seemed less than conscientious about what they drew. Most artists were glad to get a commission and were eager to please, if only to have an assignment next month... and the month after.

Some artists, like Lee Elias, who drew horror and crime for Harvey, publicly stated that he regretted his work in later years... and is purported to have said that he didn't realize the significance of his more extreme work in Harvey's horror trio (*Witches Tales, Tomb of Terror*, and *Chamber of Chills*). There were others who felt the same.

Some artists who later became successful as advertising and magazine illustrators, said the comics were just a stepping stone to "better things".

Some artists won't even discuss it!



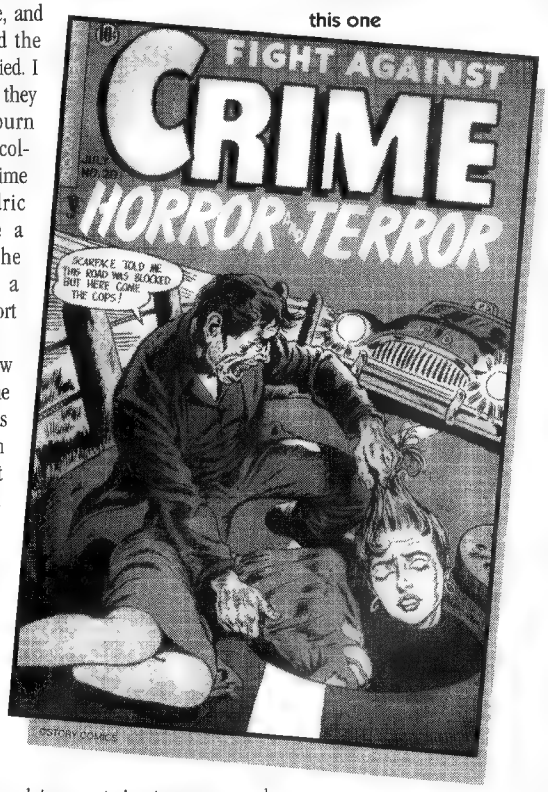
BOUND & TORTURED and under attack by a deadly black panther

Going Overboard?

Having already written a dozen or more books before *Seduction of the Innocent*, Wertham knew exactly how to convey his point. Hence the reason *Seduction* made its mark. My parents, learned people that they were, and artists to boot, read the book and were horrified. I was horrified too... they had the gardener burn my precious comic collection! For a long time the name Dr. Fredric Wertham was like a nightmare to me; he was a spoilsport; a Cromwellian spoilsport at that.

I was young; how was I to know what he was driving at? It was not that Wertham went overboard; it was my parents that did. Copies of *Captain Marvel Adventures* were destroyed along with *Crime Does Not Pay*. ANY American comic was evil, so to the bonfire it went. Oh, how I disliked Dr. Wertham. But I now see that all he was doing was trying to save me and

DR. WERTHAM WAS OUTRAGED at covers like this one



millions of other youngsters from what he perceived to be a genuine threat to the well being of young children

I once recall a Catholic priest telling my mother that the church liked to instill the faith in children when they were very young. This way the church would be pretty sure children would grow up staying with the faith. In some circles this might be called brainwashing. But all religions do it with impunity. Is the same principle applicable to violence? If one is subjected to enough of it, one can be brainwashed into thinking violence is A-OK?

Balanced View?

Perhaps the good doctor went a little too far in some of his criticisms against comic books. Looking through the wonderful Gerber volumes one realizes that the number of actual crime, jungle girl, and horror comics was quite small compared to the more benign material children read. Dell comics outsold everybody else combined... and none could really accuse DC of producing evil comics to corrupt the young. Except for its jump on the horror/crime bandwagon in the final years of its life, Fawcett always had "wholesome" comics as well. Captain Marvel... honestly, how could anyone criticize the Big Red Cheese?

No, I don't believe for a moment that Batman and Robin were gay; Superman was a Nazi, or that sexual innuendo was not crafted into brawny jungle king's shoulders. If it was, it was surely by accident.

Nevertheless, I think collectors owe Dr. Wertham a more balanced evaluation... and a second look. Was he right in going after certain "irresponsible" publishers who, for the sake of a quick buck, took advantage of the Constitution? Was he right in bringing public attention to those that produced some pretty grisly comics?

If violence begets violence, then does exposure to graphically violent media affect children? Does exposure to graphically violent media desensitize children to real-life horror and crime? Would any of you collectors (who are parents) really supply pre code horror books to your young children without looking through them first? I've a sneaking suspicion that you would.

Today

One looks at the youthful adult generation of today and one wonders. Many I have spoken to cannot string a decent sentence together. They grunt and "uh" and "um". They know little other than who won the local high school football game. Violence is "cool". A movie with fast paced action, guns, slaughter, humiliation of women is "cool". A gentle romantic drama doesn't get a chance. "That's boring. There's no action", is the oft quoted phrase.

Thankfully not all 18 to 30 year olds are like this, but there are many more of them out there than, say, 15 years ago. This was Wertham's nightmare, what he wanted to prevent. Kids today have liberal access to more crime, horror, and perversion than ever before. The comics industry pumps out comic books that are far worse than many Dr. Wertham fought against. For one thing there is no reading matter left in them and certainly no imagination.

Only Part Of The Problem

Although Wertham hammered comic books unmercifully (and perhaps somewhat unfairly) in *Seduction,* if you read carefully you will see that he regarded them as only part of the problem. Other factors such as poverty, broken homes, street violence, all played a part. Comics were, to these youngsters, the icing on the cake and they left an impressionable taste.

Dr. Wertham wrote in his summary at the end of *Seduction of the Innocent*, "People neglect the pre-violent manifestations of the trend toward violence. They forget what the philosopher Erwin Edman said: 'It does not take long for a society to become brutalized.' Comic books are not the disease, they are only a symptom. And they are far more significant as symptoms than as causes. They shed some light on the whole foundation of moral and social behavior. That, I begin to feel, was the most positive result of our studies. The same social forces that make crime comic books make other social evils, and the same social forces that keep crime comic books keep the other social evils the way they are."

Was Wertham right? About the content of some comics: Yes, I fervently believe so. He was not, as many argue, a champion of censorship and had no desire to censor comics. What he simply wanted was to prevent the sale of extremely violent material to young children. It has been four decades since *Seduction of the Innocent* was published... and this a seemingly reasonable and logical rule that has yet to be adopted in this country. ■

Nicky Wright is a published author, an avid comic book collector and historian, and a student of popular culture He has three small children; seven, five, and four years of age.

Special thanks to James B. Reibman, Ph.D. for his absolutely invaluable help concerning information about Dr. Wertham. James Reibman knew Dr. Wertham and has written a feature, "The Life of Dr. Fredric Wertham", which appeared in 1990. Wertham's entire works, his studies, interviews with patients, court appearances, were entrusted to Professor Reibman by Hesketh Wertham and are the property of the Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University.

Thanks also to Fantagraphics who supplied me with facsimiles of Dr. Wertham's articles published in The Comics Journal. *Kitchen Sink Press is re-issuing Seduction of the Innocent early in 1996. The new edition will contain a foreword by Professor Reibman. All serious comic book collectors should have a copy. Gemstone, in collaboration with Russ Cochran, is reprinting the entire run of EC comics chronologically. If you want to see some of the best and most controversial comics of the early fifties, call 1-800-EC-CRYPT.*

Horrific Sleepers

They'll scare the wits out of you... and for bargain prices!

One of the thrills of collecting is finding an old comic book you've never seen before. And, as an added bonus, often times it seems these comics are a cut above the norm... yet priced the same as comparable issues. In fact, many dealers and collectors consider these books among the real bargains of our hobby.

In the case of horror comics, scarcity is one of the main factors keeping most collectors from discovering some of the little-known classics still lurking just beyond the edge of their collections. It's always more difficult to appreciate a book you've never seen.

The following group of rather obscure horror comics are worth every penny of their current Overstreet listing... and seem undervalued when compared to other, better-known, books.

Over the years my friends and I have seen our favorite comics rise exponentially in value. These price increases were generally a result of publicity of some kind. Maybe an extremely high price was paid at auction, or an article appeared spotlighting a certain title or issue. Well, in the case of the following books, prices could rise tremendously in the Guide and they'd still be bargains.

So hold on to your skullcaps and take a ride down the "ghoul's alley" of Horror comic sleepers!!

Menace #5 Undoubtedly the hottest title in the Atlas line! Most horror collectors want *Menace* comics, and few are around to be had. A favorite entry in this eleven-issue run is #5 because it contains the first appearance of the Zombie. Yes, this is the same Zombie that went on to appear in his own magazine at Marvel in the '70s. Just imagine what would happen to the value of this comic if Marvel ever revives the character and makes a major motion picture based on the comic!

Horrific #3 This title showcases the art of Don Heck. I never knew he could tell such a great story until I read these comics. Recently the demand for *Horrific* has outstripped the supply. Issue #3 has one of the more interesting covers. And don't forget to check out *Horrific*'s sister title, Weird Terror.

Thing #12 Sporting what I believe is the first Ditko cover ever published in comics, this one is truly a sleeper. I can tell "Sturdy" Steve was out to entice me to buy this comic book by the truly gruesome cover, drawn in lavish detail. Add to this a great Ditko story inside, and we have an accurately decribed classic book.

Web of Mystery #17 It starts with an incredible Lou Cameron cover and story, and ends with an amazingly low Guide value! Whenever any Ace comics are for sale, all the Cameron issues have usually been stripped clean. Obviously other collectors have realized that the Cameron issues are worth owning. The art that Lou did for these books really stands out above all the other stories.

Fight Against Crime #20 The cover on this comic is so gruesome that this has to be considered a horror book! Highly sought after by collectors, demand far exceeds supply.

Beware Terror Tales #8 The Fawcett horror line is really enjoyable, and this book has one of those great covers that sticks with you for a long time. Bob Powell did one of his superb horror stories inside. Unlike some other genres, one of the first rules of Horror comic collecting is that an even less than great cover can hide an incredible story on the inside.

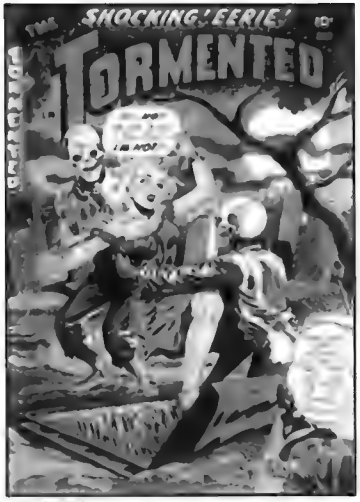
Weird Horrors #7 Ekgren only did three covers for comics. While difficult to describe, these covers are one of a kind (or three of a kind!). The man had a talent all his own, and I sincerely wish he'd done more work. As an added bonus, the interior has a Kubert story, as well as a rather tepid (by

BY JOHN HAUSER WITH MIKE KRIESEL

his standards anyway) Lou Cameron story.

Tormented #1 This is a genuinely scarce book with an excellent cover…two ghouls forcing a pretty girl into an early grave.

So there you have it…eight Horror sleepers! This list is by all means all-inclusive. There are many more horror books that also fall into this niche. With a little effort, any collector can find new books that are true bargains in this genre. Even though every genre contains many under-valued books, it seems as though the horror genre is still relatively unexplored. I guess the trick is to find the gems before the majority of collectors find out how cool they are, and prices start to increase on all of those "unknown horror classics." Thanks for reading and happy hunting! ■



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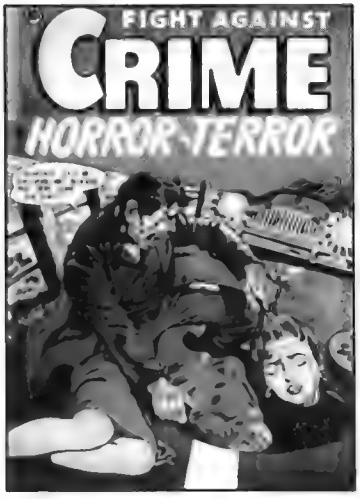

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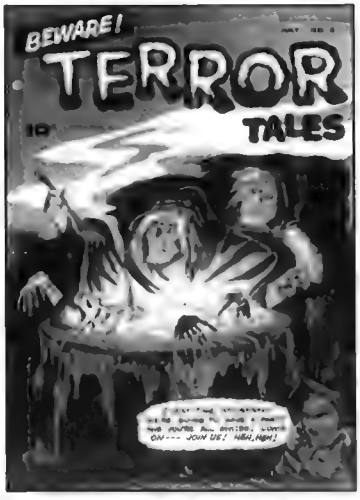

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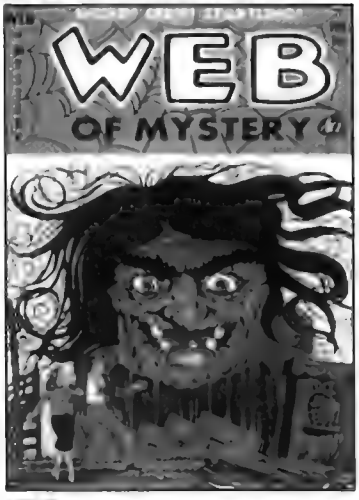

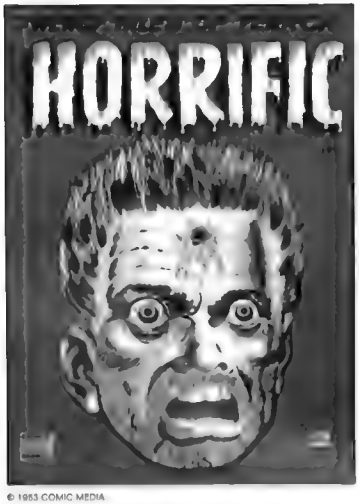

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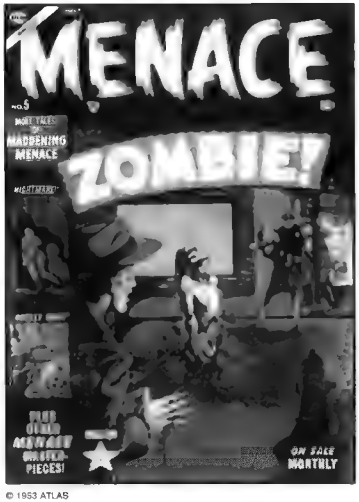

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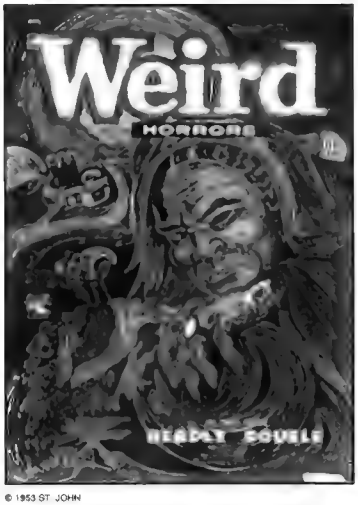


© 1953 ST. JOHN

Clever Creations for Casper Collectors

With Casper floating across the cover, you may wonder "where" Casper is in this mag? Sorry..... I haven't actually SEEN him, but I can describe some toys he has left behind.

Of the hundreds of Casper toys made, I've picked up a few strange and interesting products along the way. Most Casper toys were manufactured after 1958. Why? In 1959 Mattel Toys sponsored "Matty's Funday Funnies" TV show, which started airing on ABC and featured Casper cartoons. Continuing through the '60s, Casper eventually landed his own show. Here's a checklist of sorts of the more interesting toys and a few comics... and the good news is that these collectibles can (mostly) still be had for reasonable prices! (All toy values listed are for condition "8", unless otherwise indicated. Comic values are for Fine condition copies.)

TWO CASPER STUFFED DOLLS EMERGED IN 1959, one with a tear-drop mouth, the other with a French scarf and beans in his head. Another toy with Mexican jumping beans from 1959 came with three different action boards where the beans could go from hole to hole.

- ✔ **"Tear-Drop" Doll** $40-50
- ✔ **Bean Bag Doll** $35-40,
- ✔ **Mexican Jumping Bean Game** (the boxed set) $25-35

ROLLING TO 1968, Spooky joined with Casper for appropriately named Devilsfood Sandwich cookies. With "Frightfully Good" on the package of these Casper and Spooky embossed Oreo type cookies, there seemed no products the little ghost could not endorse.

- ✔ **Devilsfood Sandwich Cookies Box** (Scarce) $100-150

STAYING IN FOODS, IN 1970 OUR FLUFFY WHITE friend flew to Ralston cereals and signed on as the sponsor of a new cereal called Sugar Chex. I guess the contract he negotiated said that his image he must be "larger than life" on the box front. Inside was a free "flying Casper". This toy had Casper formed into a propeller that would twirl into the air when you pushed him up his spiral spear. As you can see in the photo, Casper has a shaft through his body with no ill effects.

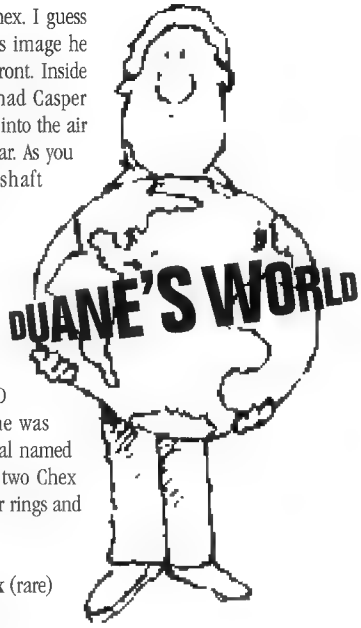
- ✔ **Sugar Chex cereal box** $300-400 (Scarce)
- ✔ **Flying Casper Propeller Toy** (Mint in pack) $45-50

IN 1972, CASPER MUST HAVE DEMANDED his image be jacked up a notch as he was continued on an even shorter lived cereal named Super Sugar Chex. Throughout these two Chex cereals you had chances of getting Casper rings and puffy stickers.

- ✔ **Super Sugar Chex cereal box** (rare) $600-800
- ✔ **Casper Rings** (three different color bases) $40-50 each
- ✔ **Puffy Sticker** $35-40

MATTEL GAVE US THE COOLEST, WEIRDEST TOYS EVER IN 1971– Talk Ups. This series of talking hard plastic dolls were never deemed demonic by anyone, even though the head would depart from the body and say disturbing things like "Boo! Oh I scared myself" or "Let's play ghost...eeeeeoooo" or " Can you make a spooky sound?" or "Tell me a ghost story" or "Hi I'm Casper" or even innocently "I'm a friendly ghost". This toy never loses its head, no matter how many times you pull it off - it just keeps coming back like... like... like a bad nightmare!

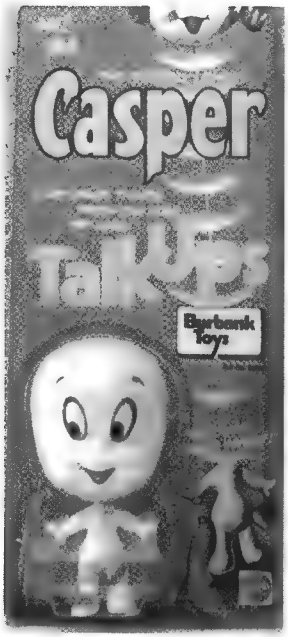
- ✔ **"Talk Ups" talking doll** $25-35



BY DUANE DIMOCK

PUFFY STICKERS
Casper glow-in-the-dark stickers go for around $35 to $40.

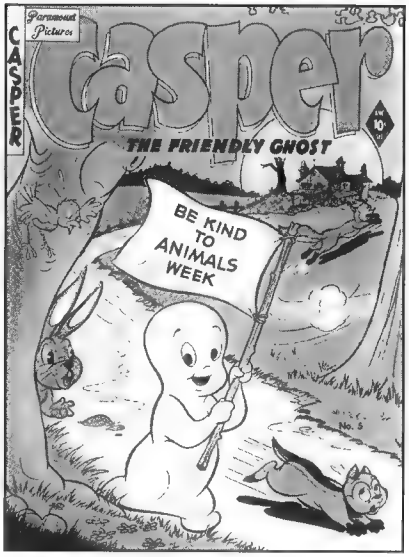
CASPER © 1995 HARVEY PUBLICATION , INC

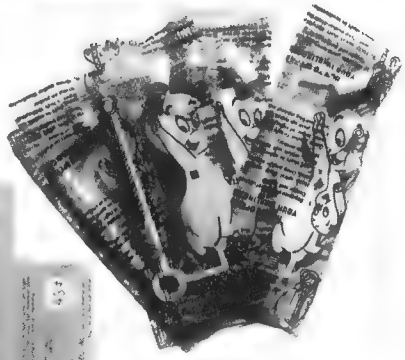


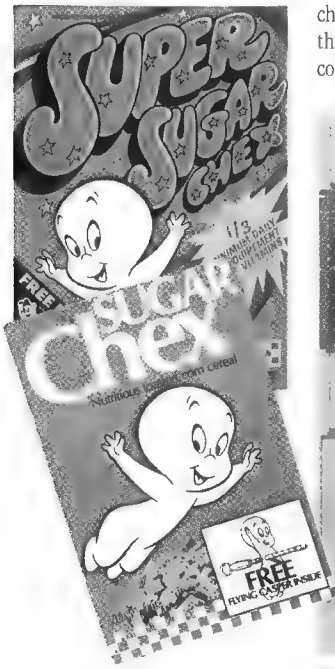
AND FINALLY, THERE ARE CASPER COMICS... BUT not those published by Harvey! The most interesting *Casper* comics were the first issue 1-5 published by St. John! Now here are some wonderful and relatively scarce comics... with all the charm of the Harvey Caspers but with more personality! If you haven't already, check out the first five *Casper* issues... they are so neat, they're, uh, scary!

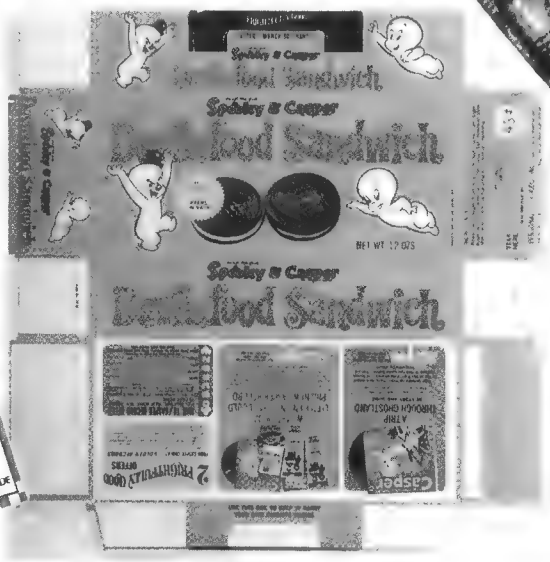
- ✔ **St. John *Casper* #1** (1949) $250-300 for a Fine copy.
- ✔ **St. John *Casper* #2** (February 1950) $200-300 for a Fine copy.
- ✔ **St. John *Casper* #3** (August 1950) $150-200 for a Fine copy.
- ✔ **St. John *Casper* #4** (March 1951) $100-150 for a Fine copy.
- ✔ **St. John *Casper* #5** (August 1951) $125-175 for a Fine copy.

WITH THE RECENT MOVIE, A MASS OF NEW ITEMS suddenly appeared all over the world, making Casper not only the friendliest ghost around, but also one of the most merchandised comic book and Cartoon characters around. And the news is that you've got more than a ghost of a chance to find most Casper collectibles! Good luck and happy hunting! ■









CASPER COLLECTIBLES (counter clockwise from upper left) **Casper "Talk Ups" talking doll, Super Sugar Chex cereal box (rare), Devils food Sandwich Cookies Box (scarce), Flying Casper Propeller Toy, and St. John's *Casper* #1 comic book.**

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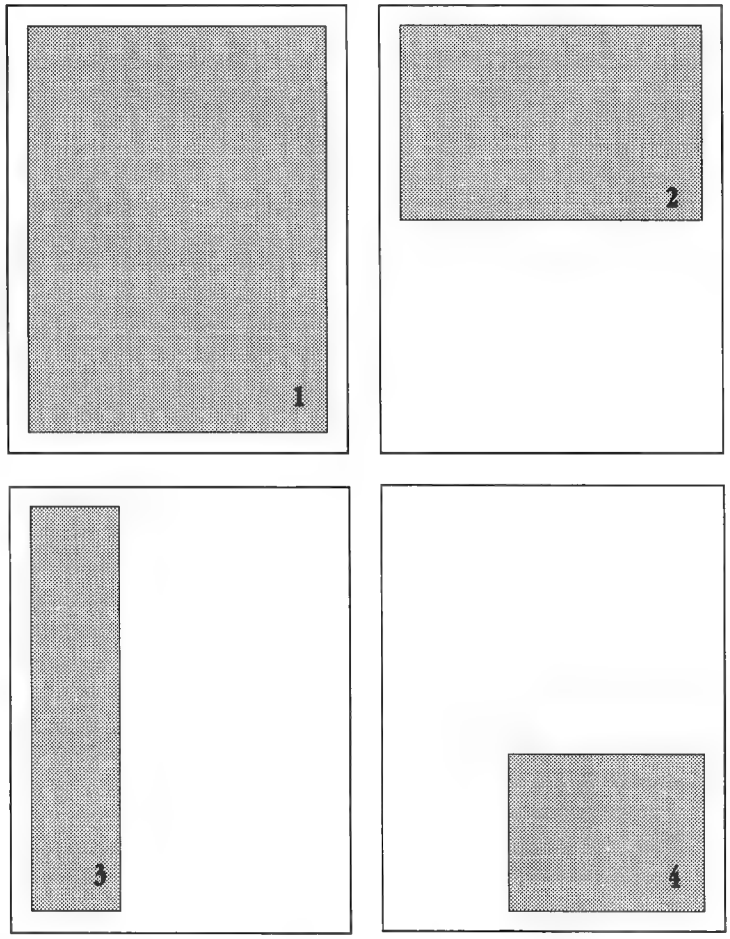

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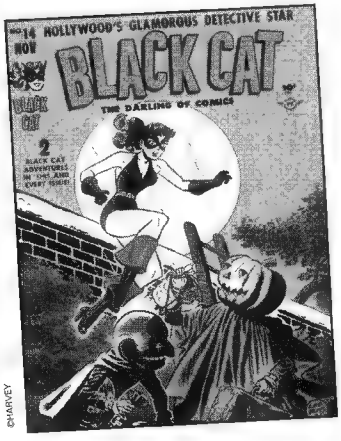
Collecting Halloween Comics

by Dean Scoville

Halloween has definitely made a popular resurgence in recent years. For children, it continues to hold the promise of fun, frivolity, and best of all, sweets. For adults, it brings back childhood memories of haunting our neighborhoods on All Hallows Eve. Halloween has always been my favorite holiday. Clad in tights, caped and cowled, I'd sojourn out to conquer phantoms and ghouls. Pranks and adolescent antics were as appetizing as the candied rewards they produced. Nocturnal skirmishes on All Hallows Eve were occupied with gratuities and extortions, and engaging in my own sartorial metamorphoses. When not running around with fake teeth and a crimson smear, I could be found in my Batman or Spider-Man costume.



A pumpkin headed villain is surprised by Hollywood's most glamorous detective on the cover of *Black Cat* #14.

Cover art that's a classic... from *Looney Tunes* And *Merrie Melodies* #25.

So, it should hardly prove surprising that when my father gave me a copy of *Comic Cavalcade* #12 (Fall 1945), a Halloween-theme comic from his own youth. The delightful and "old" squarebound issue acted as the catalyst for another life-long obsession. That Green Lantern, Flash, and Wonder Woman would don Halloween masks and might roam the same streets as I, piqued my imagination. Soon, comics competed with issues of *Famous Monsters Of Filmland* and Glow-In-The-Dark Aurora Monster kits for shelf space in my room: The Nocturnal Avengers vs. The Creatures of the Night.

All year round, I would purchase the usual horror and monster comics along with my favorite DC superhero books. But as September and October rolled around, my weekly visits to the PaperBacker in Valinda, California, sought out the distinct black and orange covers of the season. Like other seasonal homages, the covers didn't necessarily tie in with the issues' content. No matter. So long as skeletons clattered from their closets, heroes inventoried Jack O' Lanterns, and witches and ghosts shared the night skies with our regular masked crusaders, I was content to buy.

In the early years of comics, one title or another was always good for a Halloween tie-in. From *Mickey Mouse Magazine* and *Ace Comics* of the late 1930s to *Black Cat* and *Our Gang* in the late 1940s, Halloween-theme covers abound. *Dell Giant Comics*, with its ever-changing cast of characters, found a wealth of stories featuring pumpkins and witches. Each October brought forth Halloween merriment and hi-jinks. Whether Bugs Bunny brewed carrots in a witch's cauldron (*Bugs Bunny's Trick 'N Treat Halloween Fun* #3, October 1955) or Little Lulu and Tubby hitched a ride on a broomstick (*Little Lulu and Tubby Halloween Fun* #6, October 1957), we were always entertained by their battles with benign evil forces in search of candied treasure. "Tweety's Twick or Tweat Game," "Bugs Bunny's Boo Book," and "Bug's Pumpkin Puzzle" were just a few of the bonuses added to *Bugs Bunny's Halloween Fun Trick 'N Treat* #4 (October 1956). Other treats tucked inside the back cover and hidden between stories of the Dell Halloween-theme comics were Halloween party games, favor ideas, and puzzles.

Other notable Halloween covers of the 1940s include the November 1943 *Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies* Halloween issue which featured a shrouded and carrot-nosed Bugs Bunny stalking Porky and Petunia Pig while twin bats hover ominously against a yellow moon. *Black Cat* #14 (November 1948) featured the title character springing over a moonlight-bathed wall in pursuit of one

pumpkinheaded suspect and his Halloween-masked accomplice. One of the most colorful Halloween covers can be found on *Frisky Fables* #39 (December/January 1950). Real Halloween fun was promised in this issue of Frisky, as Neddy Bear (wonderfully illustrated by L. B. Cole) perched atop a swinging Jack O'Lantern, swoops down on a "bobbing for apples" party, spooking its contestants. This smile-inducing comic has perhaps the quintessential Halloween cover combining several complementary images for a fantastic Halloween motif.

Looney Tunes #25, a trio of Bugs Bunny Dell Giants, and a quartet of Little Lulu Dell Giants feature endearing depictions of Halloween... making them sought after by Holiday-theme cover collectors. Comics with Warner Brothers characters are achieving new popularity and demand, especially in high grade. Likewise Dell Giants featuring Little Lulu Halloween covers are among the highest demand issues.

Donald Duck #26, from 1952, is one of the all-time great Halloween-theme comics. This issue featured a haggard old witch menacing Donald Duck at his threshold while his bemused nephews look on. The cover is classic Carl Barks who also rendered the interior story, "Trick or Treat," wherein the witch battles Donald in a duel of wits and patience over Donald's treats. Not surprisingly, our hero comes up short on both counts and gives up the ghost as well as the candies.

Another of my favorite Halloween stories was the EC adaptation of Ray Bradbury's "The October Game". I remember playing this game as a child, sitting in a darkened room with my friends, telling tales of evil witches, and passing strange-feeling objects around the circle (grapes for the witch's eyes, popcorn kernels for her teeth, noodles for intestines, etc.). This version of the familiar game is played out against a background of domestic failure wherein an obsessive father "helps" his daughter prepare for her birthday party.

Midway through the game, as the "witch's" body parts are being presented to the guests, the girl's mother whispers, "You're not too scared, are you, Marion?...Marion?...Oh my god!" Despite her anguished cries to the contrary, "then some fool turned on the lights." I'll never forget those final words, or the final panel of the comic where we see the shocked and horrified faces of the guests as they behold Marion in their hands. Brrr! Unfortunately, it was also one of the stories that sounded a death knell for EC's horror titles... and it also contributed to the genesis of the Comic Code Authority.

Now, one might have expected the unfortunate advent of the Comic Code Authority in 1954, with it's tenets regarding monsters and mayhem, to have curtailed much in the way of Halloween-themed works. In addition, the gradual demise of Universal's monsters in the early 1950s might have been an indicator of the decline of Halloween in comics. At DC Comics the attrition of Halloween themes may be attributed to occasional lapses in production (as fate would have it, one of the two months they didn't publish *Batman* was October, a double blow to my eager mind), as well as a brave adherence to the Comic Code Authority. Fortunately, the more enterprising publishers (dare I say, the more sagacious editors, as well?) continued to give their characters seasonal releases. While Christmas certainly held a fair share of the seasonal market, Halloween was once again duly represented in the post-Wertham days by the likes of Bugs Bunny and Little Lulu.

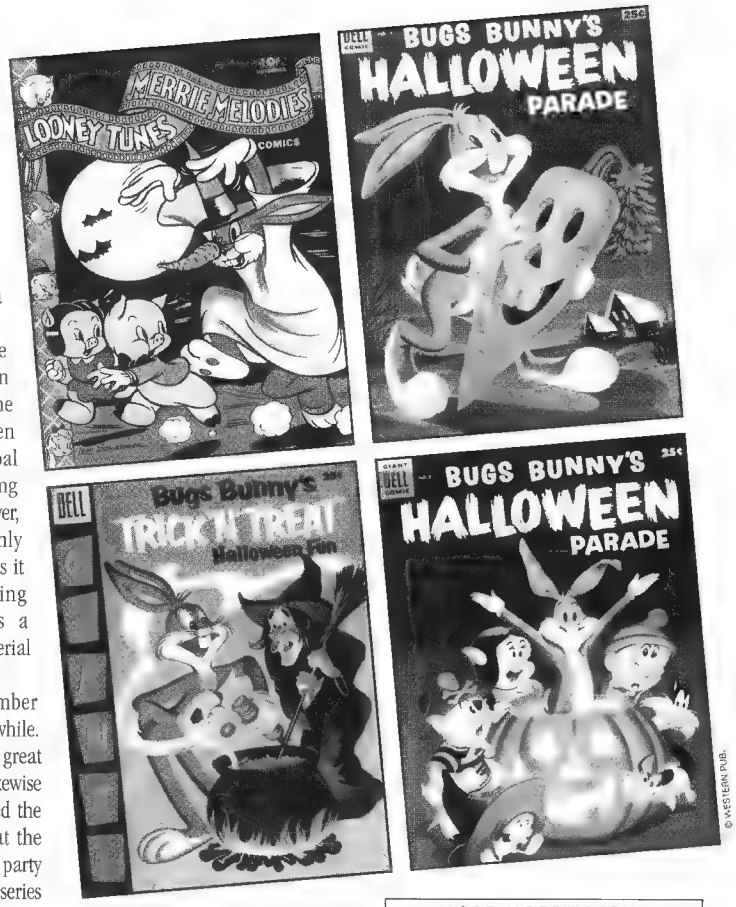
Halloween shared its seasonal spotlight with Thanksgiving, the falling of autumn

leaves, and back-to-school; comic book editors occasionally managed to weave these themes together with great results. *Sugar and Spike* #5 (October 1957) instructed us all to hide in a pile of leaves and yell "Boo!" which, according to Spike, "works every time!" On the cover of *Frisky Fables* vol. 3 #9 (December 1947), Neddy Bear and friends daydream of a tasty Thanksgiving feast as a disgruntled turkey studies the menu with a happy Jack O' Lantern nearby. No matter how thin the thread used to tie Halloween into a story, I was always thankful for the payoff.

In that some editors had the smarts to produce such issues, I'd find myself frustrated when October/November releases didn't make some subtle overture to the season. Likewise, when spring releases occasionally featured archetypal Halloween figures, I found myself second-guessing editors' calendars. As the sixties drew on, however, the Halloween titles disappeared. One can only surmise the reason for such mournful ends. Was it the soiling of the holiday by candy-tampering monsters? Whatever the cause, there is a conspicuous absence of Halloween-related material until the early seventies.

The publication of *Batman* #237 (December 1972) damn near made my personal wait worthwhile. Featuring a fantastic Neal Adams cover and a great Halloween story called "Night of the Reaper," likewise rendered by Adams, this comic at once captured the necessary noir of the subject while winking at the reader. Against the background of a Halloween party (hosted by comic fans!), Batman investigates a series of murders wherein each of the victims has been killed with a scythe. Batman mingles with the costumed guests, garnering praise ("Great costume!") and clues before closing in on the killer, a Nazi war camp survivor avenging himself against his former captors. Cloaked as the Reaper, the avenger raises his scythe to dispatch an innocent. Suddenly aware of the monster he has become on Halloween night, the Reaper loses his balance, both emotionally and physically, and falls over the edge before impaling himself upon the scythe. Point well-taken!

In recent years, Batman has been honored with the *Legends of the Dark Knight Halloween Special*. And in 1987, Eclipse Comics produced a one-shot entitled *Halloween Horror*. While basically an anthology of '50s reprints, the cover suggests a Shirley Jackson vignette, as a maternal figure affectionately waits upon a group of "little devils" with malevolent tricks (and weapons) up their sleeves.



Even though there have been just a few of the wonderful Halloween-themed comic books published over the years, I still look forward to any that are published. Nowadays on Halloween night, I still pay homage to the medium, tossing an occasional comic into kids' sacks along with a Snickers and Three Musketeers. This past Halloween, I was pleased to find as many costumed comic book heroes knocking on my door as Power Rangers. I hope that sharing my enthusiasm for Halloween-theme comic books helps a new generation of comic fans appreciate the content of their comics as well as their monetary values. Happy hunting... and happy haunting! ■

MORE NOTEWORTHY
HALLOWEEN COMICS

Ace Comics #7 (1937) & #20 (1938)
Sparkler #48 (Oct 1945)
Ribtickler #3 (Jul/Aug 1946)
Our Gang #28 (Nov 1946)
Raggedy Ann And Andy #6 (Nov 1946)
Mickey Mouse Magazine vol. 3 #2 (Nov 1937), vol. 5 #2 (Nov 1939)
Walt Disney's Comics And Stories vol. 4 #2 (Nov 1943)
Lulu and Tubby Halloween Fun issues #2 & #6 (Oct 1957 &1958)
Dell Giants (Little Lulu) #23, #36, & #50 (1959-1961)
Giant Bugs Bunny Halloween Fun issues #1 & #2 (Oct 1953 & 1954)
Archie #5 & #18 (1944 &1945)

MYSTE

In 1951 Story Comics Inc. entered the burgeoning fields of horror and crime comics with two new titles, *Mysterious Adventures* and *Fight Against Crime*. This article focuses on *Mysterious Adventures*... the little horror magazine. The first issue came out in early 1951, and is cover dated March. This was the era when EC led the pack in horror/crime titles, both in terms of artwork and skillful storytelling. By comparison, *Mysterious Adventures* stumbled out of the starting gate with tepid stories, crude art, and uninspiring covers. The theme varied between blood and guts horror and horror romance. Although blood and guts played prominently during the heyday of the run, the comic was essentially romantic horror melodrama.

Unfortunately, what was missing from the early issues was a strong style. To their credit, Story Comics Inc. soon upgraded the art with the likes of A. C. Hollingsworth and Lou Cameron. Cameron's first story for the series, "Pool of Eternity", which appeared in *Mysterious Adventures* #5 (December 1951), was far more gruesome than previous yarns. With its gritty realism and graphic violence, this story set the standard for the rest of the run. By now the covers had taken on their characteristic look- a babe in a red dress and a skeleton... *Mysterious Adventures* was turning into the kind of comic magazine that Dr. Wertham loved to hate!

By issue #7 (April 1952) the publication had reached a level of maturity with three solid stories: "Absent-Minded Fiend", "Curse of the Flying Dutchman", and "Terror of the Tattooed Man", with the latter two both drawn by Lou Cameron. For the rest of 1952 the little horror magazine put out some pretty good material, especially "Terror of the Vampire Kiss" (#8, June 1952) with art by Harrison Bache, "The Terror of the Lively Corpse" (#9, August 1952), "Terror of the Lion's Revenge" (#9) drawn by Hy Fleishman, "The Death Hand" (#10, October 1952) also by Fleishman, and "Gravedigger's Terror" from #11 (December 1952). "The Terror of the Sunken Ships" (also #11) is a violent and well-drawn pirate story that is probably the source of panels used in *Seduction of the Innocent*.

BY GREGORY A. WASKO

Close-up of *Mysterious Adv.* #20 (June 1954) These skeletal souls seem determined to make sure someone sizzles... This is comic book horror at its horrific peak.

Overstreet describes *Mysterious Adventures* #9 as showing "extreme violence", but really it differs little from other issues. This characterization is probably due to a bloody panel in "Terror of the Lion's Revenge" by Hy Fleishman and another in "Vengeance of the Vampire", which should be credited to Doug Wildey (most of his name in the splash panel is obscured by a skull).

Into 1953 *Mysterious Adventures* continued with its successful formula, coming out with particularly strong material in issues #13 (April 1953) and #15 (August 1953). Then changes occurred with #16... changes that would not have pleased Dr. Wertham. The cover and title were more ghastly, and the inside contents displayed more brutality. The stories, however, were better written, and the artwork, all uncredited, was the best of the entire run. This was *Mysterious Adventures* at its finest!

1954 saw the publication of *Seduction of the Innocent*

by Dr. Fredric Wertham and the investigation of comic books by the United States Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency. Overstreet notes that issue #18 (February 1954) was used during the Senate investigative report. The object of attention was probably "Bottoms Up", an adeptly scripted and drawn story featuring an explicit axe murder. Later that year, Dr. Wertham appeared before the Senate Subcommittee waving around issue #20 (June 1954) and spotlighting "Chef's Delight", another superbly rendered axe murder. I don't think the assembled Government authorities liked *Mysterious Adventures* very much after that.

Depths Of Depravity

Issue #21 (August 1954) saw the little horror magazine sink to the depths of depravity with its cover depicting the beheading of a blonde before a congregation of ghouls. Any kid would have been proud to own this issue, while any parent or teacher would have immediately confiscated it. "The Choker" contains graphic hanging panels, and "The Coward" is yet another axe murder with dismemberment. This issue also introduced a new feature, "Mother Ghoul's Nursery Tales", which were "updated" versions of well-known children's stories.

The first was "Beauty and the Beast", followed in subsequent issues by "Cinderella", "Old Mother Hubbard", "Chicken Little", and "Jack and Jill". They were illustrated in a *MAD Magazine* style but without *MAD*'s frenetic quality. "Beauty and the Beast" is very entertaining because it's told in 1950s hep-cat slang and uses every colloquialism known to the be-bop generation.

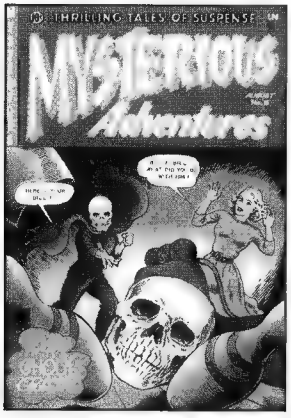
By late 1954 the comic industry was feeling the heat and had to either tone things down or be legislated into submission. *Mysterious Adventures* #22 reduced the amount of gore, but, unfortunately, the stories suffered as a result. The stifling of creativity brought about by these limits to artistic expression was inevitable, and the stories became homogeneous and bland. The final issues contained work by some good artists, such as Ross Andru, Kurt Schaffenberger, and Jay Disbrow, but the stories never attained the "level of impact" reached by issues #16 through #21. The death blow came with issue #24 (March

RIOUS ADVENTURES

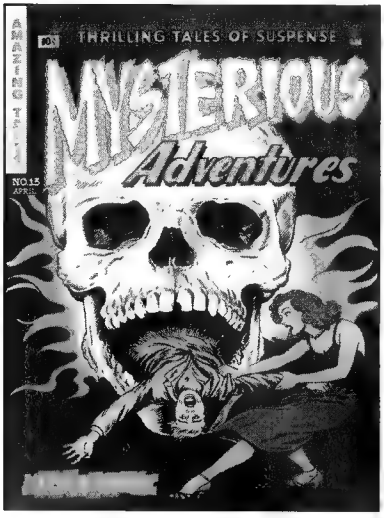
1955), the first to display the Comics Code approval stamp. After a five month lull in production, the final issue, #25 (August 1955), came out with a forgettable cover and even more bland stories... *Mysterious Adventures* had lost all its edge. The little horror magazine had no chance against the wrath of the Comics Code, and so it folded.

Commentary

Horror explores the dark side of human nature and is as old as literature itself. *Mysterious Adventures* covered the usual gamut of scary subjects: vampires, zombies, murder, and retribution. It also featured were-witches, evil dolls, transformations, inanimate objects brought to life, and other macabre themes. Most stories had a romantic element, and a few had female lead characters. It was interesting and entertaining... but it wasn't for everyone.

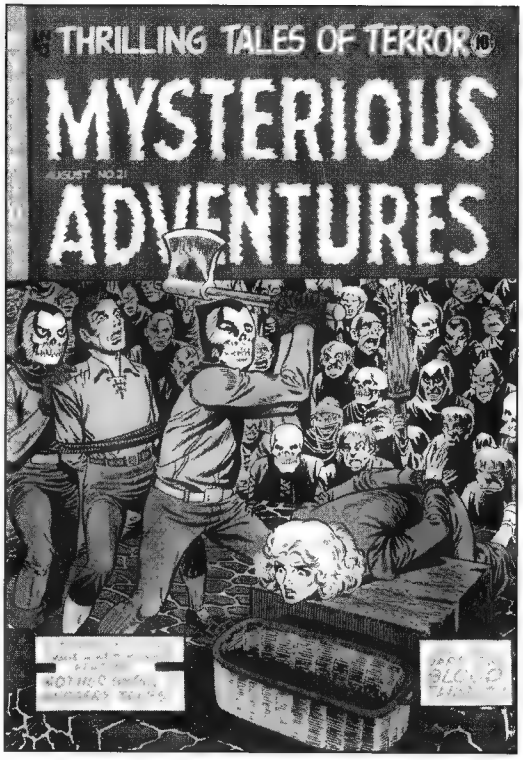


As the popularity of superheroes waned after World War II the horror and crime markets took off. Some people saw this as indicative of moral decay, especially as comic books were thought of as "kid literature", however adult the approach.



My older brother remembers the big hoo-hah in the newspapers and on radio around 1950 inviting everyone to bring their trashy crime and horror comics and other unsavory literature to the great book burning at English Bay Beach in Vancouver. I'm sure similar bonfires were occurring all across the continent in those days.

The people involved were mostly well-meaning, making what they thought was an honest effort to deal with the problems of the time. Whether such actions had any effect on juvenile delinquency is doubtful, but they certainly drove up the prices on those books for comic collectors today. On the occasion when issues of *Mysterious Adventures* are offered for sale they seem to sell rather quickly.



In closing, I think it's worth noting an important idea that has been addressed since the first written word. I feel that, instead of letting anyone else make up our minds about a given topic, we should read the material ourselves, make up your own minds, and let others do the same. End of soapbox. Thanks for reading and happy horror collecting! ■

IT TRULY IS THE MOMENT BEFORE THE AXE FELL...
1954 was the last chance for horror publishers to go all out; and *Mysterious Adventures* #21 (Aug 1954) above, responded with this...

DEATH ROLLS A STRIKE
on the cover of *Mysterious Adventures* #15 (Aug 1953, upper left), a grisly and evocative entry.

FROM THE FLAMING SKULL
tales of horror will be told! This very effective "decorative" horror cover from *Mysterious Adventures* #13 (Apr 1953) is a horror classic.

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Human Torch 1
All Star 8
More Fun 52/55/73/101
Superman 1
Sub Mariner 1
Green Lantern 1
Wonder Woman 1
Sensation 1
Adventure 40/48
All American 16/19
Batman 1
Capt. America (1)-10
Red Raven 1
Whiz 2

Others are:

Suspense Comics 3
Mystery Men 1-10
Silver Streak 6
Blue Beetle 1
All Winners 1
Daredevil Comics 1
Hit Comics 1/5
Jungle 1
World's Best 1
Amazing Man 5
All Select 1
Mask 1/2
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THE MATT SCHIFFMAN REPORT

Reading the Marketplace Signals

As we find ourselves at the end of the summer convention season, let's we can take a moment to reflect on and analyze what has been happening in the marketplace since San Diego. It seems that opinions about the state of the market are varied, and run the gamut from hot to cold, depending on who you talk to.

Seems the best information is coming from the sales results. Has Timely backed off its high end prices from the first half of the year? Is Silver picking up any new buyers? Does the state of the market remaining on the incline or is leveling off? Well, let's take a look...

Golden Age

Although a few dealers expressed mild disappointment in their Golden Age sales at the summer conventions, some admitted that sales were certainly better than last year's circuit, they were initially hoping to have "ridiculous" results to report. Others did meet and surpass their wildest expectations. Collectors have had a month to ponder and absorb all that they saw at the Cons, rethink books that they passed on, and perhaps even purchase those books after the dust settled. In spite of some "doom-sayers", I have more prices than ever to report.

Action #19 FN- $1,600, #101 AP VF/NM $300; Adventure #73 VG/FN $3,850, #77 VF $1,000; Air Fighters Comics Vol. 1 #3 VF/NM $1,200; All American #25 G+ $1,195; All Select #4 FN $895; All Winners #21 VG/FN $1,600; Boy Commandos #2 VG $250; Bulletman #1 AP FN $500; Captain America #19 VF+ $2,350, #71 VG/FN $900; Captain Marvel #3 VF+ $2,000; Detective Eye #1 FN/VF $975; Flash #8 VF/NM $2,895; Hit #3 FN $350; Human Torch #3 (#2) AP VF $3,000; Jackpot #9 FN/VF $495; Marvel Mystery #17 VG/FN $1,300, #27 VF- $1,350, #76 G $240; Military #4 NM $1,950; Punch #1 FN++ $900; Sensation #6 VF $800, #32 VF/NM $395; Smash #17 AP FN/VF $600; Sparkler #F1 FN- $1,400; Target Vol. 1 #6 VF++ $1,300; Walt Disney Comics and Stories #24 VF/NM $975; Wonder #1 FN+ $1,200.

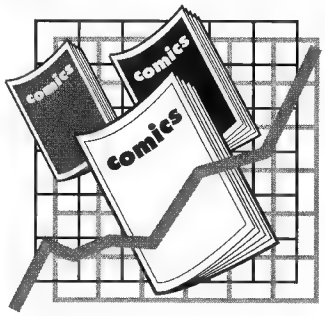
The best commentary on the market that I have heard, and one that most dealers would agree with at this point, is Golden Age books are still actively sought after. Just because a book is no longer finding a receptive audience at 3x-4x guide, does not mean that no one wants these books. In fact, the opposite is true. Dealers find themselves re-pricing some books at close to half of what they wanted at the conventions, and when they do, they sell instantly. I think it's important to remember that these books are still selling at over double some Guide prices. This certainly indicates that the talk of a stagnant Golden Age market is not accurate. All reports indicate this market remains exceptionally strong.

Post Golden Age and Pre Silver Age

Should the majority of the books from this era sell at Guide levels? Most sellers don't believe so, and are finding receptive buyers at many multiples of Guide. Leading the way, as always, is the Fox Good Girl material. Whereas most of it is listed in Gerber, there are quite a few excellent covers that do not appear. Once a collector actually sees these terrific covers, the books take on an even greater level of interest and demand. A collection of Good Girl and Romance books were recently purchased, which contained many great Matt Baker books, uncredited Wally Wood work, and beautiful Kubert stories. Obscure titles and one shots are being scooped up by collectors that recognize that these books are very unlikely to be seen again.

Sales: All Star Western #58 FN $225; A-1 Comics #54 VF+ $40; Batman #57 FN++ $265; Boy Comics #17 VF/NM $20; Captain Fleet #1 VF+ *continued*

MARKET REPORTS



GREG WHITE
Comic Books & Collectibles
Kissimmee, Florida

Hello again from Central Florida. As we settle in to our new location and reflect on this past summer season, I would use the term "average" to describe our sales activity. Large conventions in Chicago and San Diego were good but not great. Back issue store sales would fall in the same category.

Silver Age - The movement here is primarily on the very high grade keys, which don't come in that often. We would like to see greater activity on the mid-grade books (VG-FN) from this period-they are much more affordable and the story reads exactly the same as in a NM copy!

Recent purchases include a large group of DC's and Marvels from the 1959-66 era-mostly lower grade.

Sales: Star Trek 1 VG $75; Fantastic Four Annual #1 VG $600;Kamandi #1 VF $25.

Golden Age - A few sales this month. We were fortunate to buy a nice group of early DC 1936-42 books, with many titles represented. This will help fill out our Golden Age selling stock over the next few months! We also were able to pick up a restoration ready copy of Adventure #61. What a great read these early stories are!

Yes- for all the investor/speculator guys who just fainted, I do open up and read all the classic Golden Age comics!

Recent Sales- Jungle #88 VG $600; More Fun #54 VG $1500; Batman #4 GD/VG $1000.

That's all for this month. Hopefully the autumn wil be active for all of us! See you in thirty!

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Marvel Mystery Comics © Marvel Comics Group
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$100; Cave Girl #11 VF/NM $300; Crown #8 FN $85; Ghost #9 VF++ $155; Journey Into Mystery #4 FN $195; Katy Keene #18 NM $325; Krazy Comics 2nd #1 FN/VF $265; My Love Affair #4 VF/NM $170; My Love Story #3 FN $48; Patsy and Hedy #1 VF/NM $200; Popular Comics #145 VF $95; Return of the Outlaw #1 FN $48; Saint #4 VF+ $110; Swift Arrow #2 NM $70; Top Secrets #7 FN $135.

Silver Age

Although some had hoped that Silver would somehow miraculously resume its frenzied pace of the early '90s, that would probably be overestimating what actually occurred. What did happen was a resurgence of interest in Silver Age, and sales that clearly indicated that Silver Age was definitely holding its own, and gaining in momentum. The growing interest this summer in the DC "Big Five" War Books, has now taken on a more urgent pace as newer collectors begin to realize what seasoned war collectors and dealers have known for years; finding these DC keys, let alone finding them in grade, is much more difficult than locating ANY Silver Superhero keys.

Silver Age Sales: Adventure #210 VF $1,600; Amazing Spider-Man #3 FN $400, #13 VF/NM $700, #42 VF/NM $125; Avengers #1 FN- $500; Batman #189 VF/NM $60, #197 FN $20; Brave and the Bold #34 VF/NM $1,600, #34 FN $375, #54 VF+ $175; Creepy #1 VF/NM $145; Detective #327 NM #75, #370 VF++ $25; House of Mystery #156 VF/NM $85; House of Secrets #81 NM $20; Metamorpho #1 VF/NM $100; Our Army at War #91 VF $495, #115 FN $65, #153 VF/NM $50; Our Fighting Forces #47 NM $110; Richie Rich Success Stories #1 FN $75; Showcase #34 FN $345, #45 FN- $125, #45 G+ $45; Space War #31 VF/NM $45; Strange Adventures #117 FN $135; Strange Tales #115 VG/FN $70; Vampirella #1 VF/NM $250; Wonder Woman #128 VF/NM $30.

1970s

As I report each month, the 1970s books are experiencing quite a revolution in pricing and collector demand. To the relief of many collectors, this trend is occurring very quietly among the general comic populous. Within that collecting community, the pace is frenzied and extremely interesting. Three weeks ago, a chain in Portland, Oregon reported that they received a call from a collector in Texas that wanted to buy, at Guide prices, "any Marvel and DC in NM/M with a .20 cent cover price". Another store in San Francisco is easily getting $18 and up for any DC 100 pager in VF/NM or better. Many calls have come in since then with similar requests.

Sales: Adventure #399 VF/NM $700, #416 NM $18; Batman #255 NM $25; Night Nurse #4 NM $25; Weird Western Tales #39 NM $12; Sgt. Rock #302 NM $15; Forever People #1 NM $50; Demon #1 NM $35; Hot Wheels #1 VF/NM $65; Showcase #94 MINT $10; Kazar #1 '74 NM $8; Marvel Feature #1 VF/NM $125, #4 VF/NM $20; Aargh! NM $12; Shanna the She-Devil #1 NM $14; Star Trek #62 VF/NM $35; Superman #233 FN $45; Lois Lane #105 NM $8; Super Natural Thrillers #5 NM $12.

Perspective

To put the market into historical perspective, after last year's summer conventions, dealers also reported to my marketletter that they were experiencing a downturn in sales. (But, we all know how the year went after the San Diego of 1994.) I then looked at my notes from 1993, and found the same comments, yet when I looked at prices reported and sales quantity, they still outstripped Guide prices for all of these years too.

Once again, I find the same results for 1995 and wonder if this phenomenon is much like the marathon runner questioning the merits of running immediately after a race. I'll leave you with this comment I heard this week - collectors and dealers are only hoping that market sentiment is momentarily quiet, as they are looking forward to attempting to purchase material at bargain prices at the upcoming Christie's Auction in October. Till next month, keep your eye on the marketplace! ■

MARKET REPORTS

GREG PHARIS
AND DAVE GRISEZ
San Diego Comics & Collectibles
San Diego, California

Welcome to CBM #29, and yes, business is good! While new books and publishers and distributors shape and rend the marketplace for tomorrow, savvy retailers and collectors reap the rewards of yesteryears Golden and Silver treasures.

In the "Hot Stuff but Not Available" column: Jack Kirby's Fourth World, particularly Jimmy Olsen #'s 133 and 134 are high on the roster of candidates.. Sure there's lots of copies, and all of them look like they spent time in my little brothers back pocket! They are early seventies books but I haven't seen a NM copy (let alone a solid VF) in quite some time.

Wonder Woman is also now showing up lots on peoples want lists. Why? Cause they're cheap, fun, and a sure bet to turn the corner on price. The key book of course is #105, but good luck on that one, better to concentrate on #170-200 which feature the "New" Diana Prince. By the way, issue 199 features a fabulous Jeff Jones cover of a helpless Diana in chains with an executioner, axe in hand ready to slay our helpless heroine. Bad girls of today take a back seat to this affordable baby.

Enough of the recent trends, lets hit a few sales. We sold these Silver goodies on consignment: Amazing Spidey #14 VF (solid) $800; Strange Tales #89 VF $600... Fin Fang Foom still rules! Try and find a high grade of this, and if you do, prepare to pay mega multiples of Guide. These are rarer than dragon eggs!

Golden Age sells...low grade, high grade, it all sells quickly, if priced at Guide! It is a no lose situation, we wish we had more, and when we do it is always fun.

Some vintage toy sales have included "WHB" tin wind up train (1950's) $75; Flipper thermos (NM) $35; Hot Wheels thermos (NM) with a Secret Agent thermos (NM) for $30 for the pair. Star Wars (original) figures and ships always sell well for us. Till next time, happy hunting.

TIM COLLINS • RTS Unlimited, Inc. • Colorado

Ahhh the coming of Fall! Aspens changing color and the occasional snowfall. The last few months have been interesting ones. Retailers in the Denver area report sluggish new issue sales. The drop-off has caused some retailers problems. Pog sales are slowing down in the Denver area. Those dealers with Golden Age and high grade Silver Age comics have done exceptionally well, however. As current readers become more unimpressed with many of the new comics crowding the marketplace (with notable exception such as Bone) they are discovering the huge amount of comics from years before and the talented artists and writers that preceded today's "hot" crowd. Artists such as Wally Wood, Matt Baker, L. B. Cole, Alex Schomburg and others are being discovered by a new audience and re-discovered and an old one.

Bronze Age - Not much sales activity or interest here.

Silver Age - Seems to be slowing. Like a broken record...high grade sells over Guide while mid-low grade sells for 50-70% of Guide. Most notable recent sales: Amazing Fantasy #15 VG/FN (beautiful copy except for tiny tears along edge and a small piece missing from the front cover edge from a dull trimming blade) $5,000; Fantastic Four #1 VF $5,000 cash $1,500 trade; Daredevil #1 NM $1,500 to another dealer!

Golden Age - The Denver Great Eastern Cons continue to be good. While most shows are poorly attended (200 people tops), those few that make it are looking for Golden Age goodies to add to their collections. Notable sales from the IRS Collection include: Strange Worlds #7 GD $13.50, #9 PR $8.50; Tales from the Crypt #41 FR $15.50; Flash #14 VG $200; Action #28 GD/VG $150; Superman #34 GD $80; Adventure Comics #132 GD $44; Famous Stories #2 (Complete Story of Tom Sawyer) GD/VG $50; Sugar and Spike #95 VF $15; All-Star #1 GD/VG (nice except pages separated and taped together) $984; World's Finest #6 GD $108, #7 GD $117. Other Golden Age sales: Batman #5 VF $2500, #47 VG/FN (brown pages) o/w FN+ $1000; More Fun #112 VF $95, New Adventure Comics #13 VG $1600 cash $200 trade 4x Guide! (Rated 10 in the Photo-Journal)

Golden Age Soapbox - Here's my two-bits on the current state of the Golden Age market: Hot, Hot, Hot! High grade anything will sell. Lower grade Timely's and DC's sell when priced at or slightly above Guide. Finally people are realizing the price discrepancy between key Silver Age and key Golden Age books. I personally don't think that anyone can go wrong buying a key Golden Age book at even double Guide (regardless of condition).

While the multiple between Good and Near Mint will expand, I think all Golden Age books will see dramatic price increases for the foreseeable future. Golden Age books are just too scarce in comparison to Silver Age books!

Till next month's CBM, keep reading and enjoying your funny books!

TONY STARKS • Comics Ina Flash
Newburgh, Indiana

Greetings comic lovers! It has been awhile since I've done a written market report although I continue to provide pricing information to the folks at FAN. Thanks to Gary and Lisa for their continuing valuable service.

I've been busy, busy, busy grading, organizing, cataloging and (finally) selling a collection of 18,000+ items acquired in May from a collector in Chicago. The collection covered all the major (and most of the obscure) comic titles from about 1960 to 1985, so I think that I can provide some insight as to the current Silver and Bronze Age market. The collection also included about 3,000 magazines. All sales were via mail order.

Bronze Age- I'll start my report here, since I cater to and push (some would even say proselytize) comics published in the 1970's. From my perspective, Bronze is HOT. A few trends can now be definitely be observed. First, interest in the early 700's books (1970-72)) is very strong. A review of my sales show that

continued on page 73

VINCENT'S COLLECTIBLES CAN & WILL BUY

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Detective Comics #27
Marvel Comics #1
Superman #1
Detective Comics #1
All-American #16
Whiz Comics #2 (#1)
Capatain America Comics #1
Batman #1
New Fun Comics #1

For Sale

Action
#36 GD+ $130
#101 GD+ $100
#121 VG $100

All-American
#41 GD/VG $125
(Staples replaced & reinforced)

Atomic Comics
#1 VF/NM $700

Batman
#6 VG $600

Captain America
#2 VF $5750

Comic Cavalcade
#15 GD/VG (tear seal) $100

Detective Comics
#97 VF- (sm. chip s light stain) $400

Golden Lad #1 VF+ $395

Green Lantern
#8 VF $1175
#11 VG $300

Master Comics
#37 VF+ $275

Pogo Parade
VF/NM (Dell Giant) $400

More Fun #105 VF $375

Sheena #1 GD/VG .. $350

Superman
#7 (light rest) $650
#20 VG+ $300
#28 GD+ $125
#33 FN- $250
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SCOTT WHALEY AND MARNIN ROSENBERG
Alexandria, Virginia

Over the last few months, we have been extremely busy trying to keep pace with the rapidly changing Silver Age market. Now that things have stabilized a bit, we thought that it would be a good time to share with you what we have been seeing in the market.

Silver Age - The perceived slowdown in the Silver Age market turned out to be temporary. We must admit that in the weeks leading up to the San Diego Comic Convention we experienced a bit of a slowdown in sales. Many of our Silver Age customers seemed to be putting off big purchases of Silver Age books. We were not sure if this was due to general weakness in the Silver Age market or the comic market as a whole.

To find out more about the trend in the market, we decided to attend our first San Diego Comic-Con. The reason for our trip was two-fold. First, as always, we hoped to acquire some new material to offer to our customers. Second, and more importantly, we needed to see first hand what people were and were not buying. I think that you will find the results quite interesting

The demand for Silver Age in San Diego was far greater than the demand for Golden Age. Dealer after dealer, that I spoke with, told me that they were selling a lot of Silver Age. Perhaps, even more surprising, was that it was selling very well in all grades. (Of course the lower grades still needed to be discounted to Guide.) This is not to say that Golden Age was not selling. The point is that Silver Age was really putting in a surprisingly strong performance, especially for a market that the entire industry described as slow.

In the few months since San Diego, Silver Age sales have been brisk. We decided to begin offering low grade books for sale after seeing demand in San Diego. In August we purchased a large collection of low grade early Spider-Man and various Marvel keys. We decided to price them at about 25% discount to Guide in order to get a feel for the market. In just over a month, we have sold over three-quarters of the issues. We are now actively pursuing low grade early Marvels.

Other high grade sales remain as strong as ever. High grade Silver may have taken a breather earlier in the summer but it is now running stronger than ever. Every high grade issue of Spider-Man, Fantastic Four, Tales of Suspense, Journey into Mystery, and X-Men sells quickly at well above Guide prices. Well, enough of the small talk. Let me report a small sample of this months sales:

Silver Age Sales: Amazing Spider-Man- 3 GD, 3 GD+, 3 FN, 3 FN/VF, 4 VG/FN, 4 GD/VG, 5 FN, 6 GD, 6 FN/VF, 7 GD, 9 VG, 9 VG/FN, 100 GD, 1 FN, 11 VG, 11 FN, 14 VG/FN; Tales of Suspense 39 GD/FN, Daredevil 1 GD/VG, Journey into Mystery 83 GD/VG (All 75% of Guide). Amazing Spider-Man 5 VF/NM, 6 NM, 7 NM, 8 NM, 8 NM, 9 NM, 11 NM, 12 VF+, 12 NM, 14 NM/MT, 15 NM (WM), 19 NM, 200 NM-, 22 NM, 23 NM, 25 VF/NM, 29 NM/MT, 36 NM+ (WM), 40 VF++, 41 NM/MT (WM), 43 NM+ (WM), 44 VF/VF+, 44 NM+ (WM), 45 NM (WM), 49 VF/NM, 50 VF/VF+, Annual 1 NM. Journey into Mystery 85 NM, 89 NM-, 900 VF++, 95 NM, 102 NM-, 112 VF/VF+, 121 NM, Annual 1 VF/NM. Fantastic Four 3 VF+, 7 VF/NM, 9 NM, 27 NM (WM), 48 NM-, 50 NM-.Tales to Astonish 36 NM, 37 NM, 39 NM, 40 NM+, 59 VF/NM, 66 NM, 100 NM-; Tales of Suspense 41 NM, 42 NM, 43 NM, 58 VF/NM; X-Men 2 NM, 4 NM, 7 NM, 10 NM-, 14 NM, 30 NM; Strange Tales 114 VF/NM, 127 VF+, 134 NM, 139 VF/NM (all at well above Guide prices).

TONY STARKS CONTINUED

with most titles, the .15 cent cover price books sold quicker and better than the late (1967-1968) .12 cent cover price books. Another strong trend is the demand for the "bigger & better" books. Demand has never been higher for the 52 page 25¢ cover books from '71 & '72, and the 100 page Giants. I priced most of these books at 1.5 to 2x Guide, and had no resistance and almost totally sold out. A few were sold at even greater multiples of Guide, since I set a minimum (NM) price of $5.00 on the 52 page books and $7.00 on the 100 page giants. On titles like Lois Lane, Tomahawk and the like, these prices represent 3-4x Guide!

Another very strong trend, and the hardest as a dealer to keep up with, is the 70's collector's fascination with the obscure and hard to find. Secrets of Sinister House, Dark Mansion of Forbidden Love, Weird Mystery Tales all sold easily at multiples of Guide. Complete runs of Ghosts and Weird War Tales did not sell, but elicited many requests to break the sets up for individual sales, with offers of 3-6x Guide for issues needed. DC seems to have the most "obscure" titles, but there are Marvels in demand as well. The first Living Mummy in Supernatural Thrillers #5 and Night Nurse come to mind. Even Charlton gets in the act, with titles like Haunted Love.

As I sit here typing, I realize that I cannot possibly cover all the "in demand" titles, characters and trends. Plop (long ignored) sells great. Jonah Hex is much in demand, with Weird Western Tales #18 (1st full story), #29 (1st origin) and DC Special #16 (Death of) going 2-3x Guide. The horror/mystery books of the 70's sell well-both DC's long running titles like House of Mystery and Unexpected, and Marvel's shorter lived reprint titles like Vault of Evil, Where Monster's Dwell, etc. If you combine the above elements, such as horror/mystery with giant size and add a great artist, you have books that sizzle. Examples would be HOM #195 (Wrightson-52 pages) or HOM #224 (100 page giant).

That's a brief summary of what's great in the Bronze Age market. On the downside, interest falls off dramatically after 1975. With a few exceptions, most sales here are to collectors completing runs of the major titles (Batman, Spidey, etc.) and X-Men. Early X-Men, by the way, are once again selling well.

A few illustrative or notable sales: Action #412 NM (52 pages) $10, #419 NM (Human Target) $8; #437 NM (100 page) $12; Adventure Comics 428 NM (Black Orchid) $15, #431 VF (Spectre) $10; Amazing Adventures 11 VF (new Beast-very tough to find, had multiple calls))) $18; Captain America #193 (Kirby returns)) $7; Dark Mansion of Forbidden Love #1 VG $6; From Beyond the Unknown #1-25 VF/NM set $125; Secrets of Haunted House #1-46 NM $125; Sinister House of Secret Love/ Secrets of Sinister House #1-18 NM $175; Superman #233 NM (all "K" on Earth destroyed) $25; Jimmy Olsen #133 NM (Kirby begins) $18, #134 VF (1st Darkseid-many requests) $20. Big News Department: Vampirella #113 NM (1st Harris issue, published 1988) $175. Not a fluke, I could have sold five copies at this price!

Silver Age - Sales are quite satisfactory. "Run" books in "average" condition do require some discounting (around 30-40%) to sell, but that doesn't mean that the market is dead, it just means many issues is VG and FN are a little overpriced. I found that .10 cent and early .12 cent cover priced books enjoyed good sales at near Guide prices in most conditions. Most any high grade books also sold well near Guide. And not all Silver is overpriced. Runs of Blackhawk, Lois Lane, Jimmy Olsen, Tomahawk, Wonder Woman and World's Finest all sold very well. As far as characters go, Batman and Spider-Man lead the way, also selling well are Brave and Bold, Green Lantern, Flash, Fantastic Four, Thor and, of course X-Men. Also selling steady were Magnus, Dr. Solar and Turok from Gold Key.

A few representative sales: Amazing Spider-Man #12 VG $55; Brave and Bold #32 GD $13.50, #61 & #62 $70 each; Daredevil #1 VG+ $300; Fantastic Four #49 NM $175, #52 VG $12.5; Flash #139 FN $35; Green Lantern #1 VG $375, #2 GD $50; Showcase #600 VG+ $37; Sub-Mariner #1 NM $100.

Pre Code Horror - Cheap, pre-code horror sells really well. This Magazine is Haunted, Tales of Horror and the like are all inexpensive and sell quickly. The best books from this genre, the ECs, seem to be slow unless they have a special cover or story. It's clearly the price that is making the difference.

Magazines - A types seem to be in demand. The Skywald magazines (Nightmare, Psycho) sell for over Guide in high grade. As I learned from my (pricing) mistake, Heavy Metal has a solid following, with the first issue selling for $20-$30, others $3-$5. Playboys, National Lampoons, Men's "adventure" type magazines-they all seem to have an audience. Of course, the Warren magazines are in much demand. Creepy, Famous Monsters, Eerie and Vampirella lead the pack, but all of their titles have their collectors. Speaking of these magazines, it's well past time for Overstreet to list titles like Famous Monsters, Spaceman and Screen Thrills Illustrated.

Sales on magazines: Besides the aforementioned Vampi #113, Famous Monsters #1 VG+ $250, #2 FN $92, #6 NM- $135. I could have sold half a dozen copies of #1, and overall Famous Monsters sold very well.

An Archie Observation - If I were just starting out buying/selling comics (and didn't enjoy a particular genre myself) I think that I would try to specialize in Archie's. I had 100 or so issues from the mid 80's, and since they were all NM, priced them at $1.50-about 50% over Guide. Most all sold, and I talked to some really interesting collectors while making the sales! These collectors all spoke about how hard it was for them to find the issues they needed.

Market Reports continued

VINCENT ZURZOLO, JR. • Vincent's Collectibles • Belle Harbor, New York

A Magical Convention Tour - Over the past six months or so I've traveled to all of the major shows. The Motor City Con of Detroit was a good starter. I sold several key Golden and Silver Age books and made many new contacts. My next stop was Wonder Con (San Jose and Bay area). I had a great time at the show and really enjoyed the city of San Francisco. I moved a lot of mid-priced range Silver and Gold. Pittsburgh was a very well run show. I found the promoters to be very generous and accommodating. Most of my business was done with the other dealers at the show. My highlight sales were: Detective #38 FN (restored) $4,300 and a run of X-Men and Daredevils.

I like a show with a steady pace and the Heroes Con in North Carolina was just that. Throughout the entire 3-day Con I was constantly buying and selling Gold and Silver.

Chicago, Chicago...a hell of a town...Wow , what a great show! I've never bought so many books at one show. The pre-show climate was that of an Easter egg hunt! I kept searching and finding lots of Gold and Silver. Michael Carbonaro of Comic Box Productions and I bought out another dealer at the show. The booty included high grade Timelys and ECs.

The next stop was the Dragon Con in Atlanta, Georgia. And I thought comic book collectors were weird!! Although sales were decent at this show, the best part of it was being directly across from an erotic clothing booth featuring Playboy model Chanel. We worked out a deal and every customer that spent $100 at our booth got a free Polaroid picture with Chanel. Our customers were very happy with their pictures...I mean purchases.

San Diego. I exceeded all previous sales records at this event. However, I wanted and expected more from the best. The Fantasy Fair of Dallas was a well put together show, but not a lot going on there...I did have a delicious steak dinner. Ahhh...home sweet home...the Comic Book Spectacular at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York. A great way to end my long and arduous road trip. I was able to sell a ton of lower priced material and several Silver Age keys. Before getting into acquisitions and sales portion of the report, I would like to thank all of the promoters, dealers and customers who made my first tour a great one. I appreciate your enthusiasm and hope to see you next year.

Golden Age Sales: All-American #21 VF $1,500, #23 FN+ $60; All-Star #4 VG $1,000, #14 VG- $500, #17 VG $400, #18 VG $300, #24 FN $400; Batman #1 GD (rest) $4600, #2 GD+ $2,250, #5 VG+ $700, #8 VG $250; Blue Bolt #1 FN $700; Blonde Phantom #12 FN/VF $500, #14 VF $250, #20 VF $175, #22 VF $125; Captain America #6 GD $435, #7 VG+ $800,#9 VG $500, #17 NM $2400, #19 File Copy $2,600; Captain Marvel Jr. #25 NM $300; Daring Mystery #6 FN+ $2,000; Detective #44 VF $450; Famous Funnies #3 VG- $600; Green Lantern #38 VF/NM $1200; Marvel Mystery #15 VF/NM $2,750, #19 VF+ $500; Master #22 VG (rest) $7,500; Miss Fury #4 NM $1000; More Fun #58 VF (color touch) $1,000, #58 FN+ $1,200; Planet #7 VF $1,000; Richie Rich #1 VG $250; Sensation #9 GD+ $250; ShockSuspense #1 VF $500; Sparkler #1 VG $200; Star Spangled #1 GD+ $270; Superman #15 VG $350; Submariner #2 VF- $190, #5 NM $2,750, #10 File Copy $2,400; Tales from the Crypt #36 NM $225; Torchy #2 VF+ $250; USA #15 FN $200; Vault of Horror NM #22 $225; Willie Mays (File Copy) $450; Worlds Fair 1940 GD $1,100; Young Allies #1 FN $2500.

Silver Age Sales: Amazing Spider-Man 1 FN $2,700, #1 GD (rest) $9,000, #2 VF+ $2000, #3 FN+ $550, White Mountain copies #6,7,9-12, 13, 18-23, 27,31,32 @ 2.35 Guide!! Amazing Fantasy #15 VF- $7,000, VG $2,000; Avengers 2 NM $5,000, #3 NM $30, #4 NM $1,000, #6 NM $125, #7 NM $125, #8 NM $125, #11 NM $225; Daredevil #1 VG $325, #6 NM $125, #7 VF/NM $165; Fantastic Four #1 FR/GD $600, #48 VF $525, #48 NM- $600; Iron Man & Sub-Mariner #1 VF $100; Silver Surfer #1 VF $300, #2 NM $250, #4 NM $600; Tales of Suspense #49 VF $140; X-Men #1 VG $600, #3 FN+ $300..

I've been in the comic business for 7 years now and I've been intensely involved in the Golden and Silver Age market for the last year. In this short period of time, I am proud to announce I have purchased and sold my first Batman #1 and have purchased my first Action Comics #1.

Recent Acquisitions: I have been buying like a maniac all summer long. However, I've also been selling at all the major shows and through the mail. I recently purchased an Action #1 in a collection also consisting of low grade runs of Action, Adventure, Superman, Superboy and World's Finest. Also, there were some low to mid grade runs of most of the Marvel Silver Age titles including Hulk, ASM, X-Men, DD, JIM, Avengers etc. Captain America #2 in VF was a great find and it is listed in my sales ad in this issue. –END MARKET REPORTS

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Here's What I Think!

JOHN MLACHNIK

Value based on rarity... the future of comic book collecting?

Comic book collecting has moved ahead strongly in the last several years, beginning with Ernest Gerber's brilliant *Photo-Journal Guide To Comic Books*, the addition of several competitor comic book price guides and monthly comic book updates, and most importantly the auctions through the Sotheby's, Christie's, and Guernsey's auction houses, which have brought in over 3 million dollars in sales of comic books and original art. (Who would have expected the "White Mountain" copy of *Amazing Fantasy* #15 to sell a while back for $40,000?)

As the more serious collector enters the comic hobby, I wonder when rarity will become the primary focus for collecting and how the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide will address rare comic books in future issues? It's confusing to think that in Stamp, Coin, and Baseball Card collecting, rarity is the basis for value (i.e., 1913 nickel, only 5 known copies; one recently sold for one million dollars). In comic book collecting, however, rarity is often ignored. Most collectors would prefer an *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 (1,700 copies known to exist) to *Motion Picture Funnies Weekly* #1 (8 known copies with a 9th suspected).

In fact, according to the *Photo-Journal Guide To Comic Books*, rarity can actually hurt the value of a comic book, since an increase in value is determined by an average of trading prices for a year. Since rare comic books seldom trade, there is little, if any, price increase in price guides. How can we justify the current price-tag on *Motion Picture Funnies Weekly* #1 (the 1st printed appearance of Sub-Mariner!) when there are only a handful of copies left in existence?

It's only a matter of time before rare comic books receive the recognition they deserve. This writing is devoted to a look at several of these gems...

Gene Autry #1 (Fawcett Publications, 1942) There are actually two #1 issues; Dell Publication's 1946 *Gene Autry* #1 and this, the much rarer Fawcett #1 which represents the single most valuable and sought-after western comic book. *Gene Autry* #1 is a no-advertisement, 64 page, 13-"chapter" comic book that reads like a movie serial, pitting Gene against a black-hooded villain known as the "Cloven Hoof". The back cover features the

first photo pin-up of Gene Autry in comic books. On page A-36 of the 23rd Edition of *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, *Gene Autry* #1 ties with *Tom Mix* #1 in the "Chronological List Of Key Comic Books For Period 1933 To 1943" as the most important western comic book, honored with 2 stars. Collector demand has driven the price of *Gene Autry* #1 to over $3,200 in high grade. Gene Autry Comics also has the distinction of being the longest-running Golden Age western series, lasting 18 years. The Fawcett *Gene Autry* #1 is listed as "rare" in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, with only 10 to 20 copies estimated to exist.

Motion Picture Funnies Weekly #1 (First Funnies, Inc., 1939) - According to *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, the origin and first printed appearance of "Sub-Mariner" (8 pages). *Motion Picture Funnies Weekly* #1, a 36 page black & white giveaway, also features appearances of "Spy-Ring" and "American Ace". The full-color cover by Fred Schwab depicts a smiling boy walking off with a ladder being used by a man working on a marquee. Motion Picture Funnies Weekly is very rare...only 8 known copies exist (one near-mint with white pages, the remaining 7 copies in fine condition with brown pages). The 8 known copies (with a ninth suspected) were discovered in 1974, in the estate of the deceased publisher, John Compton. Covers only, to issues #2 through #4, were also found which were evidently printed in advance along with #1. The first issue (#1) was to be distributed only through motion picture houses. Possible distribution at local theaters in Boston is suspected. It is believed, however, that only advanced copies were sent out and the movie theaters rejected the idea.

The last panel of the Sub-Mariner story contains a rectangular box with Bill Everett's signature, the date 4/39, and "Continued Next Week" printed in it. When reprinted 7 months later in the 11/39 issue of *Marvel Comics* #1, the box was left in, with the date and lettering omitted. Color was also added over the craft tint which was used to shade the black & white version. Everett also added 4 pages in full color for *Marvel Comics* #1, thus extending the original 8 pages to the story to make it a 12 pager.

In Sub-Mariner, *M.P.F.W.* #1 represents the first appearance of a mutant in comic books, a trend that would begin in earnest 24 years later in the September, 1963 issue of The *X-Men* #1.

I think *Motion Picture Funnies Weekly* #1 has an unlimited dollar-value potential, comparing similarly to Stamp, Coin, and Baseball Card's single most valuable and sought-after collectibles: (1) "Inverted Jenny"

- 24-cent airmail stamp depicting an upside-down bi-plane (100 known copies). Guides for $135,000; (2) 1913 Nickel - Five unauthorized copies minted. Sold for $1,000,000; (3) Honus Wager T-206 - Rare tobacco card (24 known to exist). Sold for $451,000.

Motion Picture Funnies Weekly #1 is without a doubt, the single most controversial comic book in history. The debate which started in 1975 continues to this day as to whether *M.P.F.W* #1 or *Marvel Comics* #1 came first, laying true claim to the first appearance of Sub-Mariner. The controversy will probably never be resolved, deepening the mystery and desire for *M.P.F.W.* #1, the single most sought-after of rare comic books. Current *Guide* price - $5,500.

Double Action Comics #2 (DC Comics, January, 1940) - this is a remarkably rare and unique comic book with only 5 to 7 copies known to exist. The contents of this black & white, 68 page comic, were pre-hero stories; the full-color cover reprinted from *Adventure Comics* #37. Although issue #1 is thought to exist as a "ashcan" (an experiment for *Action Comics* #1 that subsequently appeared in June, 1938), *Double Action* #2 is not an "ashcan" comic and was probably distributed through newsstands. Another theory is that *Double Action* #2 was prepared by one of the many shops (i.e. Lloyd Jaquet and others) as a presentation work for DC Comics in order to secure subcontracted work. The style of the words "Action" and "Comics" is similar to the logo on *Action Comics*, Superman's flagship title. A near-mint copy of *Double Action* #2 sold at Sotheby's first comic book auction on December 18, 1991 for $6,050. The Overstreet Copy sold for $8,000 in 1994!

Famous Funnies, Series 1 (Eastern Color Printing Co., 1934)- This represents the first comic book with a 10-cent cover price sold to the general public through chain stores. It contains Sunday strip reprints of Mutt & Jeff, Reg'lar Fellers, Joe Palooka and others previously featured in *Famous Funnies, A Carnival Of Comics*, and *Funnies On Parade*. It's unprecedented success set up the beginning of the first continuous series (anthology reprint) title in comics, and was the acid test for newsstand distribution which began with *Famous Funnies* #1 in July of 1934. It is estimated that 12 copies only exist from the initial 35,000 print run. Current *Guide*: $16,000.

Rare comic books are buried treasure. They are priceless regardless of content and should be sought out by serious collectors. They're out there, somewhere... so let the search begin! Until next time... *Special thanks to Duncan McAlpine, Ernest Gerber, and Bob Overstreet.*

MARK WILSON
Castle Rock, Washington

Playing Hot Potato! It just plain won't work!

Golden Age comics are doing very well, better than I had predicted three months or so ago. If you talk to several of the dealers who set up at the San Diego Convention, you may get a conflicting opinion however. I keep close tabs on the comic market, San Diego was no exception. I was there as a spectator again, checking to see what the competition had and how they were pricing.

The word that comes to mind is "stunned". I was truly amazed at how high the price tags were. I felt as though I were in a foreign country with the wrong language translator guide. That's how useless the Price Guide was in determining prices. Consequently, sales were not brisk. Dealers were scratching their heads trying to figure out why the books weren't flying off their displays, and wrongfully concluding that the market has softened.

Seems they didn't take into account a most important Fact... namely you can't put the next five years of growth on a book and expect people to buy it now. There are a small number of books out there where that may well be the case, but 97% of the time it just plain won't work. I saw a consistent double guide & up pricing structure out there. Not only were the dealers doing this but several collectors were attempting to liquidate some of their pieces at unheard of prices.

This is like the game of "Hot Potato", and many are playing it with high prices. Remember playing that game as a kid? The one with the potato LAST... loses! That's what I think we are witnessing in our hobby at this time. Dealers are buying from dealers, then reselling to another dealer, who sells to another dealer, and so on until the book finally rests in the hands of the collector... who just paid the next ten years premium on it! or a dealer who paid too much for it and now can't sell. Hey - it's America, right?

The real truth is that Golden Age is selling very well, IF it is graded accurately and IF it is priced somewhere in the reasonable vicinity of the Guide and not in the Twilight Zone!

I've been selling Golden Age full time for nearly a decade now. I have sold during recessions, boom times, and during a time when all people could see was Silver Age. This is the strongest the Market has ever been, period!

Is Silver Slow? And speaking of Silver Age, it doing surprisingly well. A classic example of the strength of this Market was witnessed at the Sotheby's Auction earlier this Summer. A collection surfaced called the "Mohawk Valley Collection". The page quality was average to tanning on some material, but the cover gloss & deep colors were amazing. I thought that I could sneak away with the Lions share since everyone seemed to be focused on the Golden Age books. Boy, was I wrong! Nearly all of those books sold between 2 - 5 times Guide! Amazing! Is Silver Age slow right now? No way! The Market may have taken a bit of a breather, but look for this area to heat up again by the end of the year.

I think it's good to remember that there are more than ten times as many Silver Age collectors as there are Golden Age collectors, with new recruits coming into both Markets all the time.

Times have changed! Remember when we justified our comic collecting to others (and ourselves) by pointing out that our books were increasing in value equal to a passbook savings account at our local bank? We were actually proud of this! The bit of wisdom that each comic book collector learned during this era was patience. Customers bought with the idea of holding on to their books for a minimum of three to five years. We knew we would make a profit after that time. Weird thinking for collectors in the 1990s? It was typical thinking during the last decade. Today, many feel that holding a book for three to five minutes is too long, and may put them at financial risk. That's an exaggeration for humors sake, of course, but the idea is still an amazing evolution in thinking for our hobby.

How many pages in a Golden Age book? With the many new recruits coming into the Golden Age Market, I've met people who have no idea and it's quite important information. Actually, it varies as much as "How many licks does it take to get to the center of a Tootsie Pop?" Just kidding. Everything is fairly simple with Silver Age page counts. With very little exception, there is a standard size and page count that is consistent.

The Golden Age is a completely different arena. In the beginning (hey - I heard those words somewhere before!) comic books were made as a throw away item. Cheap paper, old converted magazine trimmers & stitchers were used. They weren't minting new coins with nit picky Government specifications to follow. This was a "get it out the door for under six cents a copy" mentality.

First, let's look at the war years. Prior to 1943 the "average" comic book was typically sixty four pages. Which meant thirty two text pages printed on both sides. Dead smack in the middle is where the staples poked through. We affectionately call this area the centerfold. Up to this date (1943) you can count 16 "leaves" (32 pages, one on each side of a "leaf") from the first leaf to the centerfold, and 16 leaves from the centerfold to the last page. This is a "normal' page count. By 1943, paper and metal conservation was at an all time high due to the war. Businesses did their bit by conserving where they could (prices also jumped). Comics took a radical change during this time. Most went from two staples to only one center staple. This is obvious to most everyone.

What is not so obvious is what happened to the page count. A typical book during this time would have sixteen leaves on the front side of the centerfold but only 12 behind the centerfold! (if you want the technical term, these are known as half "sigs" or signatures.) They accomplished this by inserting (and gluing) a half page in four different sections of the text. The "stub ends" of these half pages are visible if you look past the centerfold area. Many collectors think that pages have been cut out of a book when they come across a book from this era. I've even had a WWII era book returned to me on more than one occasion because a collector thought that pages were missing... they were not! The book actually came that way from the original binder. Major Publications followed this pattern including DC, Timely, MLJ, Quality, and Fawcett.

To further complicate our lives, some comics were inconsistent in page count during and after the war. Fawcett books can drive you nuts if you expect consistency. They went from 64 to 56 to 52 to 36 to 48 and back again to 64 pages. No consistency. Timely did the same thing, even down to 32 pages on a few titles.

The bottom line to all this is that you have to read the stories in your comic book to make sure it's complete. But isn't that what we are supposed to be doing in the first place? Oh well...

I hope to hear from you... write to me care of CBM and thanks for reading. ■

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Continued from page 15

Katy Keene Spectacular #1

Recently, I purchased an issue of Katy Keene Spectacular #1. What's so spectacular about that, you say? Well, it seems that this particular issue is the only Katy Keene book to have a blank Photo-Journal entry! Does this qualify as Unseen Gold? If so, please contact me about possible inclusion in a future issue. Although I am not sure of the availability of this book, it does rank 6 on the Gerber scarcity index. I am eagerly awaiting your reply.

Ron Hughes, South Carolina

It absolutely qualifies! Please send us a color Xerox of the cover ASAP! Thanks for writing Ron!

Dear Pat Calhoun

Received Comic Book Marketplace #27 for which I am most grateful. To say that I am overwhelmed by the magnanimous spread you gave me is the understatement of the year! Never before and undoubtedly never since will I have the pleasure of seeing my name in billboard size. And the accompanying pages and contents, filled with undeserved superlatives, go beyond human flattery. Nonetheless, in spite of the exaggerations, many thanks for the write up and thinking of me. Sincerely,

Vincent Sullivan, New York

Hits The Nail

To date in CBM's "new" run of issues (beginning with #22), my favorite piece is Michelle Nolan's look at the year 1956 and her shedding "new" light on what may truly a good year in comics production. The mid-50s are well deserving of the respect Nolan has so eloquently put forth in describing what happened then. I found the issues raised quite helpful for my own on-going research into the levels of comics sold.

I do question a concept she raises on column two of page 17 when she says "such a parent, if he or she read comics at all, probably had given up reading by 1940…" in conjunction with " someone born as late as 1925 would have only been 21 in 1946," I would venture to say that comics did indeed influence these people.

The research I have uncovered tell me in no uncertain terms that around 1947 thru 1953, over half of all adults over the age of 18 were then steady readers and buyers of comic books as well as 95% of all kids younger than that.

People born between 1920-25 would have been 18 to 13 when Action Comics #1 came out in 1938. By 1948, there were over 60 million comic books a month being sold.

What occurred with the Comic Code was no less a national exorcism of sorts away from comics… as well as a TV (TV was already making a strong showing by then). But the "influence" of comics, positive or negative, would have been felt on the parents of 1956 is all I am trying to say here. I hope more well researched articles of this nature appear in the pages of CBM in addition to specific titles or creators. Tying in what is past with what is happening in the now is a great approach.

Flash! Just received CBM #28. The Steranko coverage in the new CBM is long overdue for one of modern comics true geniuses. I can tell the Steranko influence on your own layouts. Looks great! Steranko is one of those ultimate teachers.

Stephen Gentner's "Here's What I Think" pretty much hits the nail on the head re: what I think of the current state of the comics collecting community. His analysis of all the various magazines he mentions is pretty accurate from my three decade perspective in the comics selling field. I applaud all calls for turning the focus away from merely the "investment angle" in comics collecting and all the inherent ugliness that implies for the long term health of this wonderful hobby.

Now if only CBM ad rates could come down somewhat so us "smaller" collector/dealers could advertise comics that cost less than $100 so that the hobby could maintain itself just a little bit more. Just a though! Peace

Bob Beerbohm, Nebraska

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101 VF.....$400	**131** VF- $120	**150** NM $130
102 VF..... $400	**132** VF/NM $110	**150** VG/FN $25
104 VF $400	**133** VF.....$85	**151** VF/NM $85
105 FN+..... $210	**134** VF- $100	**152** VF+ $75
110 VF- $210	**137** VF.....$115	**153** VF..... $70
112 VF- $210	**138** VF.....$115	**154** VF- $60
117 VG/FN..... $95	**138** FN/VF $115	**155** FN+..... $145
118 FN+..... $115	**139** VF- $90	**160** VF/NM $95
120 FN/VF $175	**141** VF..... $85	**177** VF/NM $25
122 VF+ $195	**144** FN+.....$70	**182** VF $30

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World's Finest #145

Enclosed is an ad from a 1960's woman's magazine I found to be very interesting. This ad, from General Motors, shows a boy holding a copy of World's Finest. I believe #145! I Thought that you might be interested, any DC fan would be. What do you think?

Richard Yanchus, Pennsylvania

Spiraling Out Of Control

I was only an occasional purchaser of the old CBM, but since it's reintroduction I've been buying every issue. Overall, a greatly improved magazine. A few of my thoughts on the latest issue and collecting in general.

I enjoyed the article on The Witness, more profiles of obscure and oddball titles and characters are always welcome. I'd love to know more about MLJ's Hangman and exactly how his origin ties in with the death of the Comet. I also think it's high time somebody cleared up exactly when Jack Cole stopped doing original stories for Plasticman and Police Comics, the question marks in the Price Guide are getting really annoying! It seems that other Golden Age reprints has been thoroughly indexed, but nobody bothered to figure out what Plas stories were reprinted where?

I also appreciate articles on genres other than superhero. While costumed heroes are the backbone of comic collecting, even the Gold and Silver Ages (just what exactly are we suppose to refer to comics published between 1949-1956 as?), fandom's obsession with them will always limit the medium's attempts to be taken seriously as a popular art form or as significant cultural artifacts. Knowledgeable collectors like Pat Calhoun deserve much praise for promoting interest in other genres, and with the price of Golden Age superhero books spiraling out of control, I sense a renewed interest in other types of books from the forties and fifties.

It would also help if the Overstreet Price Guide would acknowledge underground and alternative comics. As a long time collector of undergrounds, I can understand the confusion caused by multiple printings, self publication, irregular publishing schedules, and small press runs... it makes a comprehensive listing of them difficult, but I'm not asking for an update of Jay Kennedy's 1981 Price Guide. Just as the Overstreet doesn't list every giveaway ever printed, I don't expect to see every underground listed... but I feel the Guide does a great disservice by pretending that many of these books have no collector value.

As long as I'm ruminating on the Price Guide, doesn't it strike anyone else as odd that a book that prides itself on it's extensive network of experienced advisors, perennially grossly underestimates the value of certain books, like Suspense #3? Just asking,

Richard Byard, California

Mad Mona Writes

Recently have come across about five issues of CBM (22-26) and am enjoying these very much. I have always held a special fondness for the Golden Age of comic books. Comic Book Marketplace is a nostalgic trip each issue. Thanks,

Mad Mona, Texas

My thanks to everyone who wrote in this time, I look forward to hearing comments and suggestions from CBM readers all over the world. You're all part of the "CBM family" now, and your opinion counts! I hope you'll write or FAX soon! Please note that CBM reserves the right to edit letters selected for publication for length and/or content. If you'd care to write, send communications to:

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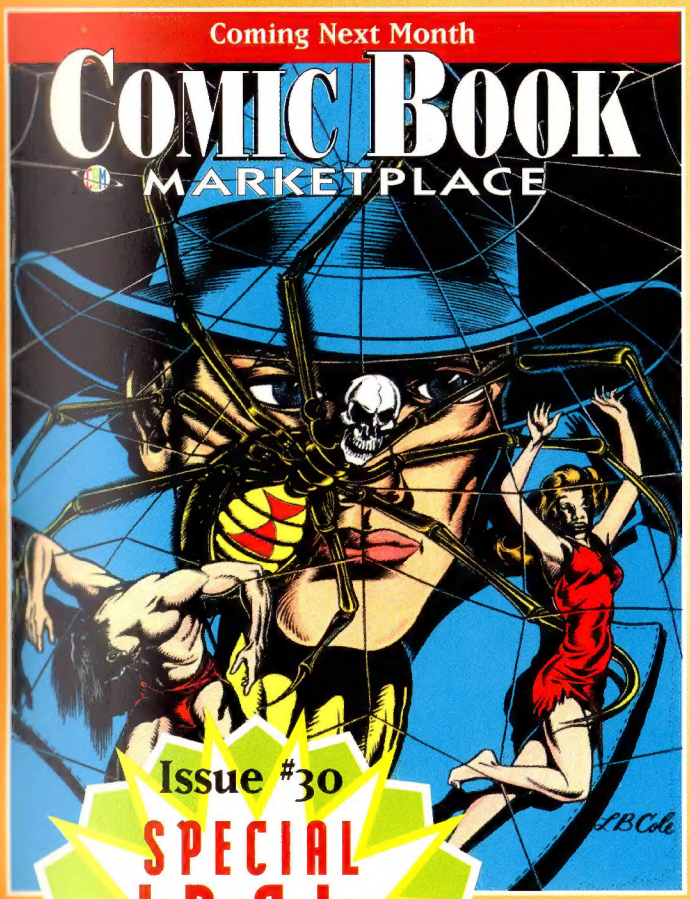

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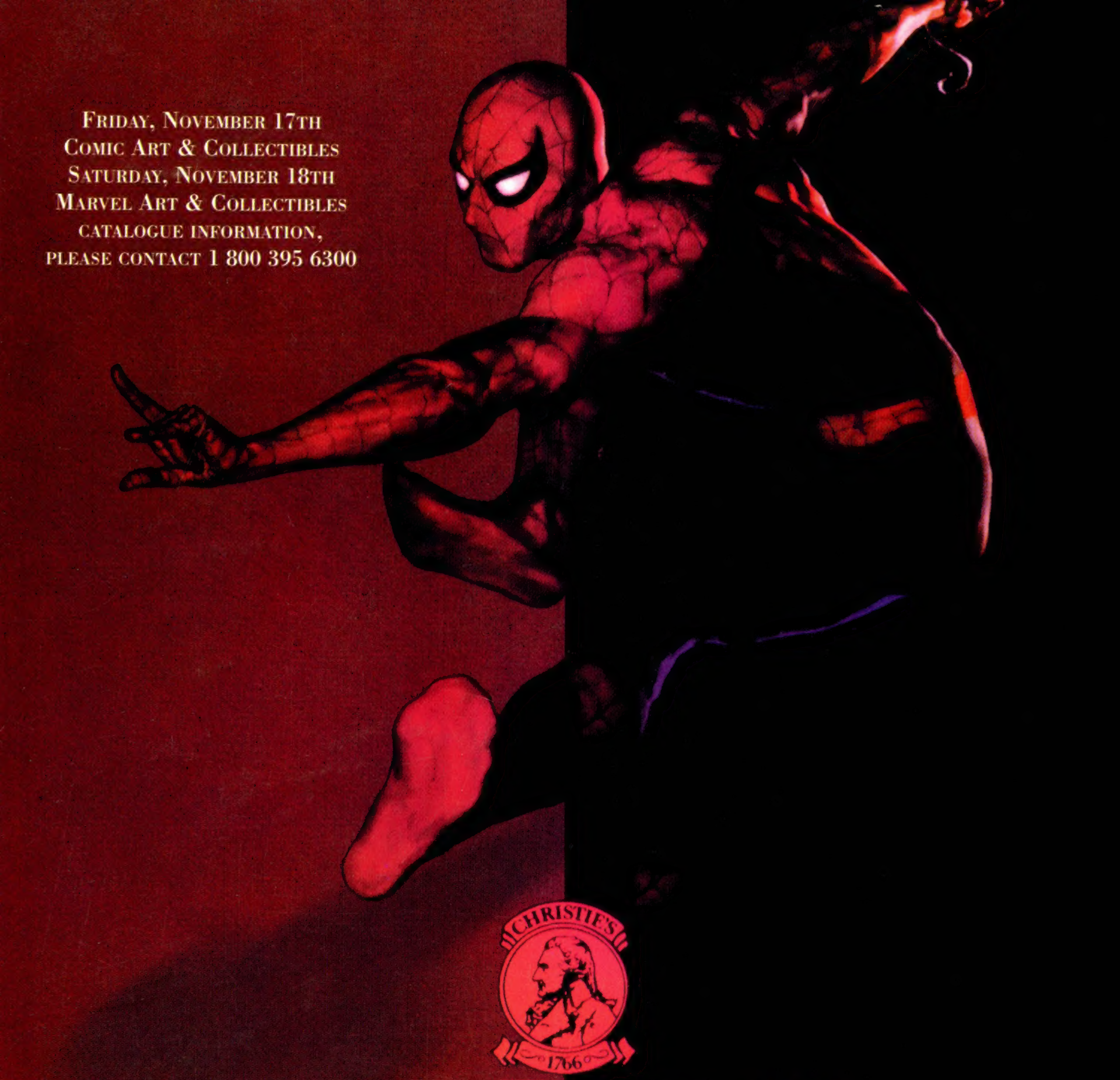

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